

## Actions That Build Community

*connect with others • build trust • get involved*

Communities grow stronger when citizens regularly and persistently do a variety of simple things together that give them chances to connect with others, build trust and get involved in doing things together. The web of trusting relationships that grows from people sharing food, helping others with everyday tasks, and joining together to recognize, help, involve and entertain one another makes bigger joint ventures possible and strengthens resilience (go to [www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/) to learn more).

This exploration identifies 75 different actions from a longer list prepared by a group of academic researchers and civic leaders who want to support the creation of what they call social capital (their label for networks of connection that build trust by involving people in one another's lives and projects). This list is just a way to encourage thinking; it is not a n instrument for research and many other actions will serve the purposes of connecting people, building trust, and involving people with one another. Use these pages to explore the current pattern of community building action from three different angles: the actions you and your family regularly engage in; the actions your organization actively supports people with developmental disabilities to take; and any service policies or practices that could make it harder for people with developmental disabilities to act as community builders.

People have different interests and gifts so actions that come easily to some might seem alien to others. What matters to the quality of community life is the number of people who regularly connect, build trust, and get involved with one another. There is more to overcoming social inclusion than taking actions like these, but these are good practices to build a stronger, more diverse foundation for our common life.



## 75 Actions that Build Community\*

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Community grows stronger through hundreds of little and big actions citizens take every day.

As you scan the list put a mark next to any of these actions that you or a family member has done either in the past month or so, or for more occasional actions, in the past year or so.

- Invite neighbors over for a meal or barbecue
- Attend a political meeting
- Support local merchants
- Volunteer your special skills to a community organization
- Donate blood (with a friend)
- Work in a community garden
- Mentor a person of a different ethnic group
- Surprise a new or favorite neighbor by taking them food
- Avoid destructive gossip or help someone else avoid it
- Help another person outside your home fix something
- Attend local school or children's athletics, plays, & recitals
- Get involved with scouts
- Sing in a choir
- Attend a party in someone else's home
- Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores
- Audition for community theatre or support a production backstage or volunteer to usher
- Attend a lecture or concert
- Give to your local food or clothing bank
- Play cards or games with friends or neighbors
- Walk or bike to support a cause and meet others
- Participate in a political campaign
- Attend a local festival or parade
- Find a way to show personal appreciation to someone who builds your local community
- Coach or help out with local (youth) sport
- Offer to help a neighbor with garden work or shopping or a ride
- Start or participate in a discussion group or book or film club
- Start or join a carpool
- Plan a "Walking Tour" of a local historic area
- Tutor or read to children or have children read to you
- Run for public office
- Host a party
- Offer to serve on a committee outside of work
- Form a walking group (or a swimming group) with at least one other person & encourage each other
- Play a sport
- Go to church and connect with people and activities
- Ask an elder or a young person to teach you something
- Host a potluck supper
- Take dance lessons with a friend
- Become a trustee
- Join a campaign & take action that brings you into contact with others (not just a donation)
- Gather a group to clean up a local park, cemetery or waterway
- Bake something for neighbors or work colleagues
- Plant trees
- Volunteer at the library or primary school
- Call an old friend
- Sign up for a class & meet your classmates
- Accept or extend an invitation
- Log off and go to the park
- Say hello to strangers
- Find out more by talking with a neighbor you don't know very well yet
- Host a movie night
- Help out with or create a newsletter
- Collect oral histories to discover the interesting things people have done

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\*Adapted from [www.bettertogether.org](http://www.bettertogether.org) which identifies 150 social capital building actions.

- Cut back on TV & interact with people instead
- Join in to help carry something heavy
- Make gifts of time
- Greet people
- If you think someone needs help, ask to find out & do what you can
- Fix it even if you didn't break it
- Pick up litter even if you didn't drop it
- Attend gallery openings & art exhibits
- Organize a neighborhood yard sale
- Read or listen to the local news faithfully
- Attend a public meeting or hearing & speak up
- When inspired write a personal note or send a card to friends
- Offer to watch a neighbor's home while they are away.
- Help out with recycling
- Ask to see a friend's photos
- Invite a local politician or official to speak to a group you belong to
- Start talking to people you see regularly
- Listen to the children you know and find out what matters to them
- Plan a reunion of family, friends, or people with whom you had a special connection
- Hire local young people for odd jobs
- Write a letter to the editor
- Join a group that is likely to lead to making new friends of different ethnicity, or religion, or income, or life experience

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*What can we learn about community building from your own pattern of action?*