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Know your neighbor game

There's been a while now, this anger, everywhere we turn. We see it on the internet and in our neighborhood. There's a lot of hurt and fear. We've seen people intending to cashiers, other drivers, and the same people might be irrationally angry at their toasters if their bagels are on fire. Fear and overwhelm can bring out the worst in people so it's easy to be viled. When there's more than we can handle getting into our brains and bodies, it's hard for us to be the best version of ourselves. Now that we set out why someone might be on edge, I challenge you to get better. Even if you have to grind your teeth to stay still - for the better. When your family walks outside in your neighborhood without a mask, and your neighbor comes screaming at you with his cell phone, taking pictures, and calling you socially irresponsible. You might want to hit back. But, better... Explain your side of things and understand the panic. Please don't post pictures in public groups that embarrass them. Please don't get involved in the screaming match. Personally deal with the situation in the best possible way. When the world gives you a lot of bad things, maybe your friend is sick, and your mother is struggling with her mental health. Maybe you feel like drowning, and if you see another clean shirt thrown into the laundry, it will be your tipping point. Maybe your kids are acting up. And you feel like lashing out, and sometimes on people, you're quarantined with, the people you love the most. But, better... Take a deep breath. Find your time. Do what you need to do to get into better head space without acting irrationally. Be the one who makes the bad days better, and the better days better. Be the one who treats the world better than treating you. Be the one who chooses to be better. Because love breeds love. Kindness breeds goodness. And we need more than this now. It may be easier for some people than others, but it is always an option. This post originally appeared on the author's Facebook. Her book *Living FULL: Winning My Battle with Eating Disorder* is available on Amazon: This post comes from the Today Parenting Team community, where all members are welcome to post and discuss parenting solutions. Learn more and join us! Because we're all in this together. Sometimes it is easier to love our neighbors in theory than in practice. A little irritation builds up over time, and given our fast-paced lives, find ourselves simply ignoring our neighbors rather than trying to forge good relationships. But in reality, taking a little time to establish a connection with neighbors pays a lot of dividends and prevents a lot of distractions, drama and discomfort. Here are 10 surefire ways to be a good neighbor and reap the benefits of a close-knit community. Handwritten notes Housewarming gifts can bring unexpected joy in this world of virtual interaction. It is also a great way to introduce yourself to new neighbors and make a good first impression. Related: Welcome Home: 10 Great Gifts for the New Homeowner Especially if you live next door to someone who is single, greeting and friendly—but not very friendly. Read your neighbors' cues, and if they don't seem eager to continue the conversation, show you can be trusted by respecting their boundaries. Overcoming loud music and neighborly chatter can be the number one cause of stress and strife. Give your neighbors a heads-up before you throw a party, and choose a mutually agreed time to cut out the music. With the theft of the door bars increased, keep an eye on your neighbor's package. Do you live in an apartment building? Take your neighbors to their front door. If you own a home, offer to collect your neighbor's packages, mail or newspapers while they travel. Related: 12 Things You Can Do to Protect Yourself from Packet Theft A little positive interaction can go a long way toward reducing tension and worry. If you plan on throwing a party or starting a renovation, tell your neighbors about the days and times when they may be uncomfortable. Find ways to thank them for accommodating, and returning the favor by being flexible in return. Always consider how your actions can affect your neighbors. Don't let Fido bark endlessly or run around on ropes. If you live in an apartment, do not pacing in 2 a.m. when you may be bothering the people living below you. Attention and consideration can be easily overlooked, but they help make the world more enjoyable. Yes, there are times when group chats and apps like GroupMe can help facilitate environmental activities and communication. Remember that text messages are not the right forum for misunderstood conversations, complaints, and long jokes. For sensitive conversations, pick up the phone, or knock on your neighbor's door. Beware of unusual noises and other signs of disturbance, such as dogs or constantly barking doors that stand open. If children are playing on the street, check to make sure that an adult is present. Our attitude towards our homes is a reflection of how we feel about ourselves — and others. When you're proud in your home, you help set the tone for the whole neighborhood. So, go out of business welcome, and put some pots of greenery on the front door. Your home sends a message; Make sure it's one of peace and kindness. Build relationships with your neighbors. In good and bad, you would love to have a community nearby. All aspects of life look different in 2020 — and that includes Black Friday shopping. Major retailers already offer seasonal offers and promotions in their online stores, so you can for friends, family, and maybe even yourself. Who said that neighbors would be beautiful, if they just didn't live so close? Perhaps someone who has lived across the street from an unusually noisy household, next to someone who refuses to trim a heavy branch that looks like it will come down in every storm, or in the street from a barking dog. The neighboring problem is very thorny because by definition, you will deal with these people again. You'll see them on the street and maybe meet them at a grocery store or your kids' soccer game, and you don't want to ruin any relationship you have. So when the problem is brewing, take a breath before deciding to enforce your legal rights to the fullest. Always learn about the law and then start with a conversation, even if you doubt it will help. In some circumstances, another good path for neighbors can be mediation - sessions with trained and neutral third parties that can try to help you arrive at a good solution. Many cities now offer free or inexpensive mediation services for environmental disputes. Gracia Lam for Reader's Digest For 25 years, I have lived in this dead-end street, where cliffs descend to the floodplains of the Santa Ana River, where garages have been converted into flats or mother-in-law's apartments for recent immigrants. Some of my neighbors have been here even longer, but we lost three of them during the Great Recession which everyone thinks is over now. Diane (all names have been changed to protect people's privacy) loses her job at a heating and air conditioning company and then loses her home; Anthony's wife left him for someone else, and then Anthony lost his house; And Rick took his family to Central California because he lost the business he had run in his garage, making tire pressure gauges. Lemons are 69 cents each at the grocery store, and my daughter needs ten of them for the recipe, but we returned them. All ten. We went to Sandra's house, where her Meyer lemon tree was loaded with the sweetest thin-skinned fruit, better than the store, anyway. Sandra's husband has decided to leave her and their autistic son in pursuit of her new love, who is 30 years old. (He is 68.) Sandra's house is underwater, a term no one had heard of until the new Dust Bowl mortgage scam. Sandra's husband went for one of the aggressive home loans from a company that is being sued by the federal government. But suing won't help Sandra. When we hear the news about settlements that occur many years after someone loses their home, we often talk about who money now that the yard has turned into straw, roses into potpourri on their stems. Sandra was a seamstress, so I asked her to fix the hem on my favorite dress, which I bought 12 years ago. We picked a bag of lemons, and then, while we were talking on the side of the road, I was me take fruit in our house. A van stopped —that's our neighbor Julia, from under the street. She was laid off from her last job, then hired as a waitress at a new restaurant that would open in two months. Two months is a long time without income, especially when his employer requires him to buy a uniform with his own money. The top-level economic discussion is about cliffs, ceilings, sekusters and bargain chips. At the level of sidewalks and neighbors and fences, this is about chicken noodle soup and beef ravioli, which I know are sold — for less than a dollar per can. On my porch are eight bags of the best navel oranges in my town here in Southern California, picked only by Mr. Gordon from his own tree a few blocks away. His son was my student at the local college 24 years ago, and for two decades, he's been bringing us oranges. The smell filled the air near my front door. I share it every year among family and friends — that's why he takes them. I handed Julia a bag through the van window, and she went home to her son and her father. It's January, and there's snow on the ground in many other places, but my house is full of gifts. This is why my mother's family moved to this region from Switzerland, and my stepfather's parents from Canada: the promise of fruit in the trees even when the mountains are cleaned in white, the sun is not punishing, as in August, but soft and nutritious. In my kitchen is a large avocado picked by Karla, who lives nearby. Her daughter brings me bags every week. Since her third husband left, Karla has barely made her rent payments. He was a surgical technician, hired part-time by the hospital when they needed him; she is also a surrogate mother, for the third time, bringing pregnancy to wealthy couples, and that job outside full time. I brought him a bag of oranges, and eggs from my chickens, and I always bought whatever his son and daughter sold for their school fundraiser: candles and sweets and raffle tickets. (He has five children and three grandchildren.) I have tangerines from my best friend, who lives a few blocks away. She is a widow and, like me, has three children. We met when her husband was sick with cancer and my husband had a midlife crisis and moved on, and I started cooking dinner for both of us. And then my ex-husband stopped by for his orange bag, but he also dropped off a box of tea and a box of half-and-half he got at the 99-cent store. I wore a cashmere sweater handed down by my daughter's best friend's mother — she gave me four sweaters in the fall. This is how it works when times are tough and even when times are better, if we are lucky. The woman stood on the sidewalk and rested our backs against the fence and leaned against the open car window to see who needed what. In the 25 years I've lived on this block, there's been a recession before, but this one has been the longest. So all week my daughter and I have been eating avocados that slice like butter and scrambled eggs from our chickens, three of which my ex-husband rescued from the backyard of someone who lost his home. We're not underwater. It's a false metaphor. We stomped on the water while those on top of us — corporations and even federal and state officials — seemed to be a very heavy document on us or threw invekifts about food stamps (some people on the block had to use them briefly, quietly, and relieved to stop) and the health benefits (Sandra's autistic son's help for dental work, glasses, and home care had been slashed). We have tea and oranges and tangerines, which we can only hope is enough for now. We have each other, which is what people had in the 1930s and during other recessions. I have a beautiful grey cashmere sweater on my shoulder. Lemon in an old juicer on the table. I have saved so much during my life on this path. Today, I think, Sandra saved me at least \$15, with lemon and my dress hem. At dusk, I headed to the store and got ten cans of chicken noodle soup, ten cans of beef ravioli, and five frozen pizzas, all for sale — because that's what a boy on the block likes to eat. And then I sat on my own front porch, waiting for the coyotes to emerge from the river much later and raccoons and possums that would nose around for sweet, orange peel dimples on the sidewalk. Sidewalk.

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