

## NEIGHBOR COMMUNICATION

The importance of **communicating with your neighbors** cannot be understated. They can be someone you can reach out to within a few minutes, whether it's for chatting or emergency situations.

Now there are two types of neighbors: the good and the ones you want to stay away from. But having a decent relationship with both of them can help foster a peaceful and safe neighborhood to live in. You can also help maintain such a pleasant atmosphere through communicating better with them, let's get started!

### Listen And Listen Well

Listening is showing them respect. It also shows that you're someone they can trust and feel safe with. It's so much different from hearing, which requires no conscious effort at all. Listening is being present during the conversation. It's about thinking what your neighbors mean to say, engaging with them through asking questions, and responding properly. Listening is a skill, here are some of the tips to sharpen it:

- **Letting them finish.** Among the reasons why we end up interrupting someone is that we're thinking more of what our response will be instead of painting the full picture of their story in our mind. It's better to think about it only when they're done talking. It will help you respond appropriately, especially if it's a heavy story.
- **Not judging them.** When your neighbor is confiding with you, it's important to remember that it's not about you. It's about their thoughts and feelings to whatever situation they're in. Instead of judging them, listen and ask them what they plan to do with it. Only start suggesting alternatives if they ask you for it. But don't expect them to follow through with it. Most of the time, people only need someone to listen.

### Look Out For Non-Verbal Cues

Actions do speak louder than words. People give out non-verbal cues all the time, whether alone or in company. It's important to align your body language to the message you're trying to convey to your neighbors. Or else they'll end up suspicious of you, which might cause some problems later. It's also important to understand their body language because it will help you properly respond to them. Here are some non-verbal cues that you should know to better **communicate with your neighbors**:

- **Eyes and Mouth cues.** It can be really hard to suppress facial expressions sometimes. The best and worst part about it is that it's the first part of the body your neighbors focus on during interactions. The positive cues are a smile reaching the eyes and a slightly-parted lips. The negative cues are a partial smile and pursed lips.
- **Hand cues.** Hand gestures emphasize the message. The positive cue is having the hands stretched with palms up. The negative cue is having fists clenched.

- **Arms, Legs and Feet cues.** These can be confusing sometimes, it's better to pair it with facial expressions. The positive cues are arms and legs relaxed, feet pointing towards you, and arms crossed while smiling and leaning back. The negative cues are putting an arm out for distance, crossed legs, and feet pointing away.

## Be Assertive

Being assertive is not to be confused with being aggressive. Being aggressive means threatening and harming your neighbors physically and mentally. It's not what you want to be if you aim to live in peace with them. Instead, you want to be assertive. Here's how:

- **Know your boundaries and set them.** Based on your experiences, point out what that makes you feel comfortable, angry and more. Be honest to yourself while at it. Setting boundaries is not selfish. It's about protecting your inner peace so you can have healthy relationships with your neighbors. Also remember that boundaries are flexible, you can change them to whatever you think suits you best.
- **Be direct and honest.** It's time to learn to say 'No' without feeling guilty. If you end up accepting requests that really make you feel uncomfortable and undervalued, you'll end up despising and confusing your neighbors. Really, it's okay to say no. They will understand. If the time comes that you make reasonable requests to them and they say no, know that they also have boundaries. They aren't doing it out of spite.
- **Be consistent about it.** There may be neighbors who may take time to accept 'No' for an answer. But as time goes by and you remain consistent about it, they will stop bothering you. Instead, they'll learn to respect your decision. Consistency builds trust.