



Building Community

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. Trusting relationships that grow from people sharing food, helping others with everyday tasks, and joining together to recognize, help, involve and entertain one another make bigger joint ventures possible and strengthens resilience (go to 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 an 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:**

- 1) the actions you and your family regularly engage in;**
- 2) the actions your organization actively supports people with developmental disabilities to take; and**
- 3) any 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.*

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

As you scan the list:

- 1) 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. What can we learn about community building from your own pattern of action?
- 2) put a mark next to any of these actions you or your organization have supported a person with a developmental disability to do in the past month or so, or for more occasional actions, in the past year or so. How can you build on the experience of the people you support who are building community?
- 3) put a mark next to any of these actions that a person supported by your organization would find it harder to do because of a policy or current practice or routine. What changes would make it easier for the people you support to take community building action?

This is a good activity for a staff meeting with direct support professionals. Identify barriers and opportunities. TAKE ACTION!

- ___ 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

¹ Adapted from www.bettertogether.org which identifies 150 social capital building actions.



Building Community

- ___ 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 swimming group) with another 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



Building Community

- ___ 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