

Neighbours are More Than Just People

Who's My Neighbour?

What makes a good neighbour depends on the eye of the beholder. Some people get along better with certain types of people, and these types and preferences vary from person to person. The word itself, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is used to define "a person who lives next to or near another person"; this does not do much justice to defining the qualities of a neighbour. There is a deeper meaning behind the word "neighbour", and we can all agree that there are certain qualities that can make a neighbour stand out. Some appreciated neighbourly values are being helpful, courteous, and inclusive.

Everyone needs help once in a while, and who better to ask than the person you live next to? Whether you need some assistance in weeding your lawn, or to rebuild your house after a devastating storm, it would be most convenient to turn to your neighbour. Following the flooding of the Greater Toronto Area in July 2013, many neighbourhoods quickly sprang into action, with neighbours helping each other empty out their basements and pump out the water before housing management and renovation teams could come and help out. Some people were unaffected due to the type of flooring they had, but even they would go out of their way to help a neighbour who was not as fortunate. Neighbours live closest in proximity and are the go-to people for any quick, small tasks as well, such as the cliché "May I borrow a cup of sugar?" line used in fables like *The Three Little Pigs*. If you are hosting a party at a time when stores are closed (i.e. New Year's, Christmas, etc.) but you're short on some sugar or flour for cookies, you would most likely ask your neighbour first as it would be the most convenient thing to do. They would walk into their kitchen and lend you a bag or so of what you need within 5 minutes. It would also be nice to invite your neighbour to your party, as neighbours should be inclusive and loving.

Being inclusive helps build communities and make people feel like they belong. When someone moves into a neighbourhood for the first time, their new neighbours do the best they can to try and help them settle. Some ways they do this include hosting block parties, giving them baskets, or even simply by just starting a conversation. The best way to make friends or to get acquainted with someone is to spend time with them and include them in activities that they might enjoy. Almost everyone is acquainted with their neighbour because of proximity, but the closest neighbours are the ones you can trust regarding babysitting or housekeeping when you're not there. Trust is built through experiences and if your neighbour participates in activities with you, it builds a bond that brings your community a bit closer. As the great Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "*We are trying to construct a more inclusive society. We are going to make a country in which no one is left out*", and where better to start than in a local

setting such as a neighbourhood? Society will get along as a whole only if the smallest units of neighbours can prove to do so.

A good neighbour is courteous and considering. They don't blast loud music during the night, and they help out with common housekeeping (such as shovelling a shared pathway). Unfortunately, common courtesy is quite rare today. My neighbour, for example, has parties every once in a while and doesn't care to tell us beforehand so we can make preparations to deal with the loud music and chatter coming from his backyard. It isn't that big of a deal, as it merely requires us to close our windows and ignore it, but it's not very courteous on his part. As a guitarist, I have the decency to turn off my amplifier before 9 and to not play in the morning. I take into consideration that a guitar amplifier is too loud for a townhouse, especially when people are trying to sleep after a long day. Another way to be courteous with a neighbour is to not block their driveway or walkways, as it is an easily avoidable inconvenience. You may park in the visitor's section, or if you really must, ask your neighbour beforehand if you may use their parking spaces. Acts of courtesy are hard to define, but they are basically actions done in a considerate manner.

Being helpful, courteous, and inclusive are all neighbourly values, but they aren't everything you need, nor do you need all of them. People aren't perfect, but it is these imperfections that make people better than perfect. As stated earlier, what makes a good neighbour depends on the eye of the beholder. Desired neighbourly values vary from person to person. A good rule of thumb is to treat others as you wish to be treated, because what goes around comes around. The one thing that everyone should know is that neighbours are more than just people.