

What to Do to Build Connection

Community can grow through small everyday interactions, local grassroots actions, organized activities, and the way shared spaces are designed. You do not need to do all of it. Choose one small, repeatable place to begin.

Connection grows through repeated participation

You do not have to build an entire community. Pick one level that fits your energy now. Small contact, shared activities, local action, and better public spaces can all strengthen connection.

Small, everyday actions

- Use micro-interactions. Smile, wave, greet neighbors, thank a worker, and learn people's names.
- Become a regular. Return to a local café, park, library, market, class, or walking route at a similar time.
- Offer micro-help without pressure. Hold a door, carry a bag when asked, return a bin, or offer a small practical hand.
- Create a tiny ritual. A weekly walk, shared lunch table, or five-minute check-in gives connection somewhere to grow.

Local grassroots action

- Host something casual. Try front-yard coffee, a potluck, a porch hour, or a block clean-up. Keep it short and make attendance optional.
- Share useful resources. Start a meal train, tool share, ride exchange, book swap, or skill swap with clear expectations.
- Create a welcoming fixture. With permission and upkeep planned, consider a Little Free Library, community noticeboard, bench, garden, or shared play area.

Organized and digital connection

- Join around an interest. Clubs, exercise groups, faith communities, classes, community gardens, and support groups give people a shared reason to return.
- Volunteer for a defined task. Animal shelters, food banks, libraries, neighborhood cleanups, and local events offer structure when conversation feels hard.
- Use digital spaces as a bridge. Local hobby and neighborhood groups can help you find public events. Meet new people in a public place, tell someone where you are going, and arrange your own transportation.

Structural and civic approaches

- Participate locally. Attend a town hall, school meeting, neighborhood association, advisory board, or public-comment session.
- Support inclusive gathering places. Advocate for accessible parks, libraries, sidewalks, community centers, mixed-use areas, seating, shade, and affordable activities.
- Ask who is missing. Consider transportation, disability access, language, cost, childcare, age, and scheduling when planning an event or space.
- Share ownership. Invite other people to choose the time, activity, rules, and next step. Community is stronger when it is built with people, not for them.

Choose your next smallest step

Circle one. Make it small enough to do within seven days.

- Greet one person by name.
- Return to one place at the same time next week.
- Attend one interest-group meeting or volunteer shift.
- Invite one person to a specific 20-minute activity.
- Ask a neighbor what would make it easier to connect locally.
- Attend one public meeting or community workday.

Two questions that help you choose

Am I trying to build connection in my physical neighborhood or around a shared interest?

Do I have more energy for one-to-one contact or for a structured group activity?

There is no correct answer. Start where you feel safest and where repeated contact is realistic. If one setting is not welcoming, try another; belonging should not require you to ignore disrespect or danger.

Connection is protective, but it is not crisis care

If you are having suicidal thoughts, use connection as one part of support — not the only part. Tell someone clearly, use your safety plan, and call or text 988 when you need immediate help.

If you are struggling right now, call or text 988. Free, confidential, 24/7.

Sources and further reading

- U.S. Surgeon General, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community (2023): hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf
- U.S. Surgeon General, National Strategy to Advance Social Connection: Resources: hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-social-connection-resources.pdf
- National Institute on Aging, Loneliness and Social Isolation — Tips for Staying Connected: nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected
- University of Minnesota Extension, Building Social Support and Connections: extension.umn.edu/community/family-and-wellness/mental-health/stress-and-change/building-social-support-and-connections

Beyond September™ is an awareness and education initiative, not a medical, therapy, or crisis service. This guide offers general education, not a promise that any action will lead to friendship. Respect your safety and other people's boundaries. In immediate danger, call 911.