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SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Building Community Consciousness

People who feel connected to a community are generally healthier and happier. That is because having strong support systems makes it easier to move through life's challenging moments. Feeling a sense of belonging is an integral component of wellbeing.

Communities are typically comprised of people with shared interests and values. Most likely, your community includes your family, neighbors, and a few others you interact with frequently. As you consider your own community, ask yourself this question: How connected are you?

One study conducted by the Pew Research Center¹ found that only about 30% of Americans know all or most of their neighbors, and a similar study found that more than half of residents living in Toronto, Canada only know a few of their neighbors.

Community consciousness, which is defined² as a community's "level of awareness of its current social, economic, and environmental situations," requires a willingness to branch out and become more aware of what is happening beyond your own family and inner circle. It requires acknowledging and accepting the diversity among members of your community, and it involves actively seeking common ground.

One way to expand your community consciousness is through volunteerism. Volunteering enables you to connect more deeply with others in your community. Having conversations with people outside your usual networks can expand your perspectives and give you more insight into the challenges that others face.

What will you do to build community consciousness?

In connected communities, everyone benefits. The more connected you feel, the more support you can give to others—and the more support you will receive in return.



1. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/05/22/how-urban-suburban-and-rural-residents-interact-with-their-neighbors/>

2. <https://www.shsu.edu/glt002/Outreach%20articles/Theodori%202004%20community%20activeness%20consciousness%20matrix.pdf>