

REFLECTIONS

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May - June 2012

AVOIDING CONFLICT WITH THE NEIGHBORS

We all *can* just get along. The key? Communication. It's often the best way to prevent and resolve conflict before it reaches the legal system. You don't have to be friends or spend time together to achieve a peaceful coexistence, but you should try to be a good neighbor and follow these tips:

Say hello. At the mailbox, while walking the dog or when you see a moving van arrive, introduce yourself. Learn your neighbors' names and regularly offer a friendly greeting.

Provide a heads up. If you're planning a construction project, altering your landscaping or hosting a big party, contact your neighbors beforehand.

Do unto others. Treat neighbors as you would like to be treated. Be considerate about noise from vehicles, stereos, pets, etc.

Know your differences. Make an effort to understand each other. Differences in age, ethnic background and years in the neighborhood can lead to different expectations or misunderstandings.

Consider the view. Keep areas of your property that others can see presentable.

Appreciate them. If the neighbors do something you like, let them know. They'll be pleased you noticed, and it'll be easier to talk later if they do something you don't like.

Stay positive. Most people don't try to create problems. If a neighbor does something that irritates you, don't assume it was deliberate.

Talk honestly. Tolerance is important, but don't let a real irritation go because it seems unimportant or hard to discuss. Let your neighbors know if something they do annoys.

Be respectful. Talk directly to your neighbors if there's a problem. Gossiping with others can damage relationships and create trouble.

Remain calm. If a neighbor mentions a problem they have with you, thank them for the input. You don't have to agree or justify any behavior. Wait for any anger to subside before responding.

Listen carefully. When discussing a problem, try to understand your neighbor's position and why he or she feels that way.

Take your time. Take a break to think about what you and your neighbor have discussed. Arrange to finish the conversation at another time.

Neighbors are like
a jigsaw puzzle.
When you first lay
the pieces out, it
doesn't make
much sense. It's
when you start to
connect the
pieces, you then
begin to see how it
all fits together.....
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