

Ways to Improve Social Capital



Social capital, our contact and interaction with one another is declining. We are not as involved with each other as we used to be, formally or informally. Without this interaction and contact, we don't have the opportunity to talk about problems or opportunities in our communities and therefore are less able to organize to take any action. Following are simple, civic-minded and just plain polite things we can do to improve the level of social capital.

(List edited from **Better Together**, an initiative of the *Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America*, a project of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government - <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/index.htm>)

1. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor
2. Attend town meetings
3. Register to vote and vote
4. Support local merchants
5. Volunteer your special skills to an organization
6. Donate blood (and take a friend!)
7. Mentor someone of a different ethnic or religious group
8. Avoid gossip
9. Organize or participate in a sports league
10. Join a gardening club or start a community garden
11. Attend home parties when invited
12. Become an organ or blood marrow donor
13. Attend your children's athletic contests, plays and recitals
14. Get to know your children's teachers
15. Join a local service club
16. Get involved with Boy or Girl Scouts
17. Speak or host a monthly brown bag lunch series at your local library
18. Sing in a choir
19. Get to know the clerks at your local stores
20. Attend Parent-Teacher organization meetings
21. Audition or volunteer for the community theater
22. Play cards with friends or neighbors
23. Walk or bike to support a cause and invite others to participate
24. Volunteer in your child's classroom or chaperone a field trip
25. Join or start a babysitting cooperative
26. Answer surveys when asked
27. Businesses: invite local government officials to speak at your workplace
28. Attend Memorial Day parades and other local events... it shows appreciation for others
29. Form a local outdoor activity group
30. Participate in political campaigns
31. Attend a local budget committee meeting
32. Form a computer group to assist local senior citizens
33. Help coach or officiate Little League or other youth sports
34. Form a tool lending library with neighbors and share ladders, snow blowers, etc.
35. Start a lunch gathering or a discussion group with co-workers
36. Offer to rake a neighbor's yard or shovel a walk
37. Start or join a carpool
38. Employers: give employees time off to work on civic projects
39. Plan a "walking tour" of a local historic area
40. Eat breakfast at a local gathering spot on Saturdays
41. Have family dinners and read to your children
42. Run for public office
43. Stop and make sure the person on the side of the highway is OK
44. Host a block party or a holiday open house
45. Start a fix-it group – friends willing to help each other clean, paint, garden, etc.
46. Offer to serve on a community committee
47. Join the volunteer fire department
48. If you grow vegetables, plant extra for a lonely elder neighbor
49. Ask a singer diner to share your table for lunch
50. Persuade a local restaurant to designate a "meet people" table
51. Say "thanks" to your public servants – police, firefighters, town clerk...
52. Join a nonprofit board of directors
53. Gather a group to clean up a local park or cemetery
54. When somebody says "government stinks," suggest they help fix it
55. Hold a neighborhood barbecue

56. Plant tree seedlings along your street
57. Volunteer at the library
58. Form or join a bowling or golf team
59. Return a lost wallet or appointment book
60. Ask neighbors for help and reciprocate
61. Go to a local folk or crafts festival
62. Sign up for a class and meet your classmates
63. Talk to your kids or parents about their day
64. Say hello to strangers
65. Log off and go to the park
66. Ask a new person to join a group for a dinner or an evening out
67. Participate in pot luck meals and if there are none – host one
68. Volunteer to drive someone
69. Say hello when you spot an acquaintance in a store
70. Exercise together or take walks with friends or family
71. Assist with or create a neighborhood newsletter
72. Collect oral histories from older town residents
73. Join a book club discussion or get the group to discuss local issues
74. Volunteer to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in your neighborhood
75. Start a children's story hour at your library
76. Be real. Be humble. Acknowledge other's self-worth
77. Tell friends and family about social capital and why it matters
78. Plan a reunion of family, friends or those with whom you had a special connection
79. Take in the programs at your local library
80. Read the local news, faithfully
81. Fix it even if you didn't break it
82. Pick it up even if you didn't drop it
83. Go with friends to a local ball game
84. Hire young people for odd jobs
85. Start a tradition
86. Join a project that includes people from all walks of life
87. Be nice when you drive
88. Make gifts of time
89. Volunteer at your local school
90. Offer to help out at your local recycling center
91. Send a "thank you" letter to the Editor about a person or event that helped your community
92. Raise funds for a new town clock or new town library
93. When inspired, write personal notes to friends and neighbors
94. Attend gallery openings
95. Organize a community-wide yard sale
96. Invite friends or colleagues to help with a home renovation or building project
97. Join or start a local walking group and have coffee together afterwards
98. Build a neighborhood playground
99. Become a story-reader or baby rocker at a childcare center or neighborhood pre-school
100. Help kids on your street with a lemonade stand
101. Open the door for someone who needs help
102. Invite friends to go snowshoeing, hiking, or cross – country skiing
103. Offer to watch your neighbor's home while they are away
104. Organize a fitness/health group with your friends or co-workers
105. See if your neighbor needs anything when you run to the store
106. Join groups (e.g. arts, sports, religion) likely to lead to making new friends of different race or ethnicity, different social class or bridging across other dimensions

We're Better Together!

Every day, the people of Jackson are working together to shape a positive future for our community. They volunteer at blood drives, coach youth sports teams, join local service clubs, and stay informed by attending local government meetings.

Studies find that the correlation between high levels of social capital and the positive development of our children is as close to a perfect correlation as social scientists ever find.

Communities with a good stock of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime rates, better health, higher educational achievements and more economic growth.

People are better informed, more efficient, more creative and are better problem solvers. With the right networks, cooperation and collaboration take place and people work smarter. We are truly better together.

Share your story – or the story of someone you know – and inspire others to get involved!

Send your story to us:

Email: info@growjackson.com

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All stories will be considered for use in our marketing campaign. By submitting a story to JCEG, you are giving us permission to use your name, likeness and story in our campaign "We're better together!"