

(Excerpt from the 100 Neighbor project <http://www.100neighbors.org/>)

How do I meet people!?

There are many ways you can begin to meet your neighbors. The way you approach your neighbors depends on where you live and the kinds of people you live around.

Draft a short, 2 paragraph letter that you will place in your neighbors mail boxes to get them to understand the intent of the project. This will make them more open to the project and prepare them for when you decide you want to meet them. If you live around friendly people in a happy neighborhood, knocking on their doors and introducing yourself is a good way to start.

☑ Draw a map on a sheet of paper in a notebook that you will use for writing people's names and contact information when you meet them. This will help keep you organized and make sure you don't knock on someones door twice.

☑ You want to approach their home after 5:00 pm. This is usually the time when at least 1 person will be home.

☑ Knock on the door or ring the bell.

☑ Think happy thoughts. Positivity is always a good thing.

☑ Start smiling. Smiling is one of the most important things you can do to make people feel open to you.

☑ If someone answers, say "Hello, I'm your neighbor."

☑ Usually they will open the door. When they do, introduce yourself and the project very briefly. This is what I say, while smiling: "Hi, my name is Ahmed, I am your neighbor from down the street. I am working on a project that involves getting to know our neighbors. Can I have 3 minutes of your time to talk to you about it?"

☑ If they say this isn't a good time, simply ask them what time works best for them and if you can come back.

☑ If they say sure and let you in, sit with them for 3-4 minutes and explain the project to them. This is what I say "My wife and I moved here almost 2 years ago and we have no idea who our neighbors are. We feel as if everyone is living in their own separate worlds and that there is a real lack of community in our neighborhood. We started a project called the

“100 Neighbor” project, and we are on a mission to get to know 100 of our closest neighbors.”

☑ Use this time to talk with them and to try to understand where they stand. We found that some people will be really open to the idea while others may feel scared, and want to participate later.

☑ Offer to have lunch/brunch with them. Invite them over to your place and make them feel comfortable. The idea is to get them open to the idea of community and living together, a concept that no longer exists in much of America. This will take some time, especially when you have knocked on 10 or so homes/apartments.

☑ Take their contact email and let them know you will be contacting them soon.

What if I freeze when they open the door?

This has happened to me more than once. Just breathe, smile, and say hello.

What if people say yes?

☑ When people agree, I tell them that I will come back and take their picture, and sit for a little chat. When I come back, I usually take their picture and post it on the blog, along with a little bio that I come up with from speaking to them. This way the people that get added later can scroll through the blog and get to know their other neighbors.

☑ Set up a time to sit with them and get to know them.

What if people say no?

☑ Don't feel bad about it. America is full of scared people that are living in their own little bubbles. One woman told me once that she was really scared when I knocked on her door. She said she didn't know who I was and was thinking of what to do. This project is an effort to change this about our culture. The people that say no are the reason that I keep going with the project. Just thank them for their time and let them get under your skin. I had one guy actually curse at me once and tell me he's not interested. I have to admit I was really affected by him, but at the end of the day you are trying to do something positive, and if

negative people don't want to join, you wouldn't want them to be a part of the community anyway. Mark them as "No" on the map so you know not to knock on their doors again.

☑ I usually invite them anyway to events that we have as a newly formed community. There is no harm in inviting them and maybe seeing the project in action and the newly formed community will soften up their hearts towards the project.

What if they tell me to come back, but aren't there when I show up?

It is ok. People get busy and have other things to do. Maybe they had an emergency or simply forgot. Forgive and try again later.

What should I realistically expect?

Expect more no than yes. Sadly, there are many people who are not interested in getting to know anyone and only care about themselves, and this is OK. It is their life and they are free to live it as they please. One of the biggest hurdles for us was developing thick skin.

Expect that this project won't be completed in a few months. It takes time to build relationships with people and for them to begin trusting you.

Expect people to be initially skeptical.

What next?

Once you have met a few of your neighbors, start planning monthly brunches, outings in the park, or even start a book club. Each group will decide what is best for them, but the idea is to create a community of openness and awesomeness. When people talk, misconceptions get shattered and understanding permeates the mind. We are working to create a nation of understanding people who respect one another despite our differences.

Good luck, and don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions