



COMMUNITY BUILDING: COURTESY

This month's community-building tip -- about courtesy -- has grown into more of an editorial.

Last year, we ran an article about communication strategies to help neighbors work out differences while avoiding confrontation. I'm not sure if anyone in the Tanasbrook community has employed those suggestions, but I've encountered some unfortunate exchanges of late and so wanted to address the issue.

We all know the old adage about making assumptions: "When you ASSUME, you make an ASS out of U and ME." I've never particularly liked that phrasing, but the statement is true nonetheless.

The simple act of not assuming the worst in each other -- of giving the other person the benefit of the doubt, and of treating each other with courtesy and respect -- can move mountains when it comes to avoiding misunderstanding, confrontation, and outright hostility. Still, I am amazed by how many people instead treat each other with immediate disrespect, essentially choosing to assume the worst from the outset.

As an example, I was out walking my dogs one morning, just after 8:30am on a weekday. I met another neighbor who was also out with her pooch, and we stopped to talk. While we made conversation, our dogs were playing together, getting leashes tangled, and occasionally yipping. We hadn't thought we were being particularly loud, though there are some pockets in Tanasbrook where sound carries unexpectedly.

After a few minutes, a woman in a nearby unit threw open her window and shouted at us. "Would you move your dogs somewhere else when they're barking?! GEEZ!" I tried to respond with a good-natured, "Oh, certainly. I'm sorry," but the woman slammed her window in a huff, cutting me off.

The other dog walker and I were stung by both her tone and her manner. It's hard not to get your feelings hurt when someone addresses you like that. She had assumed we knew we were being loud, and that we knew we were bothering her,

when we hadn't been aware of either. A comment was made about how nasty this woman's behavior had been -- and how it had been not only directed at us, but shouted out into the neighborhood to disturb others as well. It would have been easy for us to walk away with negative feelings about this woman.

I tried to give her the benefit of the doubt. Maybe she hadn't slept well and was having a particularly trying morning. Maybe she had a lot weighing on her mind or was already feeling angry or upset about something else. Maybe she had no idea what she looked like to others when shouting like that, or what it felt like to be on the receiving end of her words.

Sometimes, when we need to ask someone to alter their behavior -- whether it's a neighbor who has the stereo on too loud, someone whose car is parked in our parking space, or someone with a barking dog -- we have a tendency to psych ourselves up for confrontation. We're uncomfortable making the request and sometimes second-guess our right to complain; our discomfort and fear over how the other person might react work us up into such a tense state that it's nearly impossible to be truly friendly when making the request.

Whether we intend it or not, that tension comes out as hardness in our voice, as stiffness in our body-language, and sometimes even as flat-out rudeness in demeanor. Being on the receiving end of this, of course, is not so pleasant. If the other person doesn't immediately give us the benefit of the doubt and respond with compassion, the person on the receiving end is likely to be inspired by bad feelings of their own.... And things can easily escalate from there.

Even if these two neighbors walk away without getting into an obvious argument, the seeds of negativity have been planted. They may carry this mini-confrontation around with them for the rest of the day, allowing it to adversely influence their interactions with others they come into contact with.

IF YOU ARE A NEW NEIGHBOR (HAVING MOVED TO TANASBROOK WITHIN THE LAST YEAR) AND WOULD LIKE TO BE FEATURED IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH! JEN WILLIS 503-690-7293 REV.JEN@VERIZON.NET

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ARTICLES WRITTEN BY JEN WILLIS

COMMUNITY BUILDING: COURTESY (CONTINUED)

Perhaps the neighbors involved will begin a silent battle of passive-aggressiveness with each other. Or the negativity may resurface at a later time in a seemingly unrelated instance. Bad feelings have a pernicious way of festering and spreading out branches underground.

So when approaching a neighbor with such a request, diplomacy is certainly key, but so also is basic courtesy. Do not automatically assume that your neighbor knows that their behavior is bothering you, or that they are being deliberately inconsiderate. Make a conscious decision to treat that neighbor with the same courtesy and respect that you would want to be shown, should the tables be turned.

Instead of "Would you turn down the music already? My ears are bleeding over here!" Try, "These walls are thinner than I'd thought. Would you mind turning down your stereo?"

Instead of immediately calling to have a neighbor's car towed away, try, "You probably didn't realize that this is my parking space. There are these other spaces here that aren't reserved."

Instead of, "Move your dogs!" Try, "You know, the sound gets really magnified right here. Would you mind taking your dogs a bit further away?"

Not a single one of us is perfect. Chances are, we annoy each other just as much as we are annoyed by others -- it's the nature of living in community. But we do have a choice when it comes to how we deal with each other. This month, let's make a conscious effort to be truly courteous, whether we're dealing with conflict or not, and to treat each other with the respect and compassion that we all deserve.

And when we slip -- because, let's face it, we're human -- it is really okay to apologize.

REMINDER FROM THOA:
HOMEOWNERS WHO ARE SELLING THEIR UNITS MUST DISCLOSE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LAKES PROJECT TO THEIR REALTORS AND TO PROSPECTIVE BUYERS.

FROM THE THOA BOARD

As many of you know, on Friday, February 3rd, there was police activity on Bridgeway Lane.

Due to outstanding legal issues involving the Tanasbrook Homeowners Association and the homeowner, the THOA Board cannot currently comment but will make an informative statement to the community at the appropriate time.

TANASBROOK BIRTHDAYS!

MARCH

Celebrating birthdays this month:

March 5 Timothy Bale on Midlake — his first birthday!
 March 12 Lake Boggan on Bridgeway
 March 17 Allen Hull on Rolling Hill

Please wish Timothy, Lake, and Allen a happy birthday!

To be included, call Jen (503-690-7293) or e-mail (rev.jen@gmail.com), and let us know when you, your spouse, and your kids have that special day. (Ages will not be listed unless requested.) Help us to celebrate YOU!

