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“I’ve got some neighbors now that I didn’t know that I had.”

My Story

Before I started talking to more people, I knew only three - and I have lived in my apartment for 10 years. My first task was to get out and meet more neighbors. In the past people suggested I do that but I just didn’t.



This time, because I had an action plan with a time line and I feel it is important to be connected, I actually did it. I also reported back to a friend who supports me with this and we talked about how it was going.

I started to talk to people around me - at the mail box, laundry room or next door - to get to know them and talk about the importance of emergency preparedness. I met one person at the mailbox, introduced myself, and asked some neighborly questions. We became friends and go to coffee now. From another person I met in the laundry room, I learned about her and her son, who happens to have a disability. I talked more with her and met her son. One neighbor is a close friend I have known for about five years. This friend and I went to visit another neighbor who is elderly and I have gotten to know her, too. I thought it would be a good idea to figure out if she has anyone to help her in an emergency.

What I Learned

Coming out of being shy is empowering because the more friends you make, the more resources you have. If something happens, emergency responders will probably be somewhere else so people nearby are the ones who can help. It's important for neighbors to get together because we can use each other. I can offer my support and my connections. This is called being included in my community. Before I was isolated in my own building. My old fear was that people wouldn't like me, would judge me because of my disability or think me weird. I broke through this.

My Action Plan

- 1) Meet all my neighbors in the building (one a week), like I have done, very casually.
- 2) Plan a *Feeling Safe, Being Safe* meeting with a neighbor and invite others to develop an emergency preparedness plan
 - List how each person wants to be helped or supported
 - List what each one will do to help out. For example: in an earthquake, if someone didn't know how to turn off a gas line, another one of us would do it.

I want help to carry my emergency kit , laptop and my phone to call my mother, if we have to leave the building. Then I can help by knocking on doors to see if people are OK or need help. Now, I want to share my experience making friends and our making plans with others because it works!