



INVEST
EAP

CENTERS FOR WELLBEING

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Guidebook

*A collation of strategies for
making meaningful connections
in your community.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Power of a Community	1
Volunteering	2-3
Neighborhood Engagement	4
The Role of Technology & Online Communities	5

THE POWER OF A COMMUNITY



Communities exist all around us and range widely from physical neighborhood communities to interest-based communities to workplace communities. Some communities we are a member of by circumstance, and for some communities our membership is voluntary.

Regardless of how or why we belong, our communities offer us so much: shared experiences, purposes and built-in support networks. When we are a part of a common-minded group, we feel a stronger sense of belonging and connection, both of which have significant, positive impacts on our mental health and wellbeing.

Additionally, membership in a community can help strengthen existing relationships, form new friendships, increase self-confidence, expose you to diverse perspectives, and protect against depression.

Recognizing the profound and positive impact that communities can have on our lives, let's explore meaningful ways to actively connect with them. Whether you may be interested in volunteering, engaging with your local neighborhood, or connecting with others virtually, our tips below are here to help you thrive in your communities.


-EAP/Centers for Wellbeing

VOLUNTEERING

In our busy lives it can feel difficult to carve out time for volunteering, but it offers so many benefits – not just for those you're helping, but for you, the volunteer! Imagine building new connections, becoming an integral part of your community, and learning valuable skills.

Volunteering is like a self-care ritual for your mental and physical well-being. It's a stress-reliever, mood-enhancer, and it provides a sense of purpose. To benefit most from volunteering, it's important that you find a good fit that matches your goals and the time you have available. Consider starting with a small commitment at first, and give yourself grace as you jump into a new role and community. And, if it's not working out, consider volunteering in a different capacity, or with a different organization. Wondering how to find the right opportunity? Check out some of our favorite ways to get started with volunteering below.

Check with these community organizations to see if they are accepting volunteers:



Historical restorations, national parks, and conservation organizations

Youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs.

Libraries and senior centers.

Community theaters and museums.

Local animal shelters, rescue organizations, or wildlife centers.

Visit these organizations online to find volunteer opportunities local to you:



[VOLUNTEERMATCH.ORG](https://www.volunteermatch.org)



[IDEALIST.ORG](https://www.idealist.org)



[REDCROSS.ORG](https://www.redcross.org)



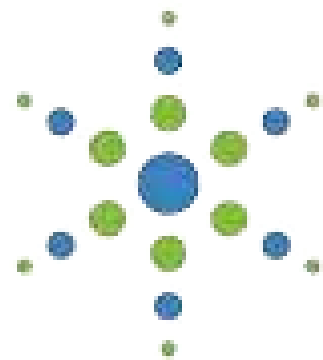
click any link to search directly on each organization's website



[AMERICORPS.GOV](https://www.americorps.gov)



[VOLUNTEER.GOV](https://www.volunteer.gov)



[POINTSOFLIGHT.ORG](https://www.pointsoflight.org)

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

The place we call home is a community we belong to inherently; our geographical community. Within our neighborhoods, there are a variety of ways we can become more integrated to connect and build relationships with others who are nearby to us. Our neighbors, local businesses and organizations, and local events all offer ways to connect with others within our community.

Connect with Neighbors

invite a neighbor for a walk

start a book club

shovel a neighbor's sidewalk

create a neighborhood directory

Connect with Organizations

join a support group

become a mentor

join a fitness class

shop locally

Connect with Events

attend a farmer's market

attend a book swap

attend a local sports event

check out your local library's event
calendar

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY & *Online Communities*

Engaging in virtual communities is a great way to connect with others who share your interests or experiences. The convenience and accessibility of online platforms make them tempting, but it's important to remember that they can't fully replace the warmth of face-to-face connections. With technology advancing faster than research, it's unclear whether these innovations offer the same level of support as in-person interactions. As you're engaging in online communities, remember these tips to help you optimize your online experience.

1 **Identify your purpose**

What are your goals in joining a community? Are you hoping to network professionally? Find support? Or, are you looking to connect with others who have similar experiences to you? Do you want a large community with broad perspectives, or a smaller and more intimate community?

2 **Keep the balance**

Aim to balance time online with time spent face-to-face with others. Consider exploring the notification settings of the platform or community to help you keep your engagement and participation manageable.

3 **Prioritize safety and privacy**

Even though it may start to feel like you're connecting with close friends, remember your online companions are (likely) still online strangers. Always avoid sharing any personal information and be cautious about links you receive from others.



CENTERS FOR WELLBEING



We're here and ready to help you find and foster strong connections with others around you.

REACH OUT 24/7



www.investeap.org



866-660-9533