



# 10 Courageous Things You Can Do To Build Community

By Milenko Matanovic

## 1. Take Interest in other people's passions as much as you want them to be interested in yours.

We all have ideas for how life should be but we are unsurpassed geniuses, we only see a small part of the picture. Asking others what they see enhances understanding.

## 2. Become a mentor to others less involved in their community.

In every community there is a small, overworked group of leaders who try to figure out everything for everyone. They go to all the meetings and take on huge loads of work while others are silent—until it is time for them to complain. This will not do. If you are such a leader, mentor someone with less experience. If you are not, approach someone and ask them to mentor you.



## 3. Support a cause with no direct personal benefit.

We are involved with things we care about the most. That's natural. My experience tells me, however, that the most interesting and possibly most important discoveries happen in the spaces between interests and disciplines and ideologies. Step outside your natural zone—it's necessary for uncovering new solutions.

## 4. Invite "them" to your meeting.

It is convenient to show our importance by pitting "us" against "them." But "they" may have insights that will help us better understand the problem and appreciate the marvelous tensions that form a healthy community.



## 5. Reject the tendency to blame.

Everyone plays a role in the problem and everyone must participate in the solution. Practice compassion towards those who, like ourselves, unwittingly contribute to the problem they wish to solve.

## 6. Confront internal contradictions.

Claiming that the problem is someone else's doing conveniently absolves us. If I drive my car to a transportation meeting and complain about traffic jams, it's necessary that I acknowledge my contribution to that traffic. At the very least, acknowledge the irony of the situation.

## 7. Practice industrial-strength listening.

Do not react until you've received.

## 8. Render unto community.

Shrink your home to what is necessary and conduct the rest

of your life in the community. For example, resist a "theater" room and visit your local theater instead. Anytime you bump into others you make your community a bit stronger.

## 9. Clarify your image of the future.

I find that most decisions we make are shaped by impulses so deeply ingrained we fail to be aware of them. Unexamined impulse is prejudice. Examined impulse, once confirmed, is guidance that leads to something better. Examine your embedded assumptions, embrace the relevant ones, and discard the rest. What remains is a clear intuition, an image of a possible future. Then engage with others to make it a reality.

## 10. Resist the temptation to choose between the ideal and the reality.

Hold them both in your awareness. Learn to enjoy the creativity and humor this tension offers.

