

REIMAGINING COMMUNITY SAFETY

A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

OVERVIEW

- Many of us have been connecting with our neighbors more than ever over the last few weeks, and feeling like we are the people who will keep us safe and cared for. What if we took that belief and built on it? What if we deepened our connection, not just in moments of crisis, but also in our everyday lives? What might our communities look like if we were deeply connected and committed to creating safe and thriving places to live?
- In this time, many of us have also been thinking seriously about safety beyond policing. What would a future beyond policing look like? How can we build just, safe, thriving neighborhoods, where we have ways of keeping each other safe and protected without policing?
- This toolkit offers some ways to do both of those things -- to keep connecting and building relationships with your neighbors and to begin to reimagine community safety.
- Use the tools that feel right for you and your community. Add to this, make up your own, learn from each other, and share what you're doing.

TOOLS FOR RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

The first step: Just connect with people!

The first step in building relationships is simply to connect with people and learn who they are. Figure out where people are in this journey and meet them there (even if it's not where you are). Don't overthink this step, but also don't undermine how important it is. You can connect with just a few minutes of time, and you don't need to have the conversation planned out - just be yourself!

Knowing your neighbors and knowing what is going on in their lives is key for building strong neighborhoods AND for being able to mobilize each other when we need to. The difference between neighborhood watch and neighborhood relationship is a big one. **Let's move from just *watching* neighbors to *being* neighbors.**

Where can I connect with people?

- Across the yard
- Over sidewalk chalk
- Out your car window
- On your neighborhood social media group
- On the phone
- Via text

How can I connect with people? Here are some tools for connecting with people and going deeper:

Connecting Tool: Hearing conversation openings

- Listen for entry points into these conversations. People are paying attention right now. They're curious about how other people are feeling and want to engage. Listen for opportunities. When a neighbor says, "Wow, what a week" or "Seems like things are pretty wild around here" or "I'm hoping things calm down," these are ALL opportunities to ask them how they're feeling and to share your own thoughts.

Connecting Tool: Asking real questions

- Conversation starters:
 - What do you think about what's been happening in Minneapolis over the last few weeks?

- Have you heard about the idea of disbanding the police? What do you think about that?
- Questions to continue the conversation:
 - Where does that opinion come from for you?
 - What's your experience with police been?
 - What makes you afraid when you think about a future without police?
 - Do you feel safe in our neighborhood? What makes you feel that way?

The second step: Go deeper!

Once you have started to connect with people, it's important that we have ways to share our opinions and thoughts in conversation. Too often, we just nod along with what people say, instead of going deeper to understand what they really think or having the courage to disagree and engage around that disagreement.

Going Deeper Tool: Share what you really think!

- Share your experience: Talking about your own experience with the murder of George Floyd or the protests is a good way to both share what you're feeling AND to hear other peoples' thoughts. "I was so moved seeing such a super young diverse crowd," or "Did you see all the people out cleaning up together..."
- To prepare for sharing your own experience, you may want to do some reflecting. Consider journaling about the following prompts:
 - What raises the most tension or confusion in you when thinking about disbanding the police?
 - How does your racial identity impact how you feel and see the murder of George Floyd and policing in the US?
 - What is hard about sharing your own experience with others?
 - What would real, complete community safety look like and feel like for you?

Going Deeper Tool: Hosting a gathering

Once you've identified people in your community ready for more in-depth conversation and action, host a gathering that feels safe to you in the context of COVID-19. Here is a [basic agenda](#) for this gathering, but feel free to make it your own based on the needs and energy of your block.

TOOLS FOR REENVISIONING COMMUNITY SAFETY

It is hard to imagine a world without the police. For a lot of us, their existence is something we've taken for granted and never questioned. Part of what is required is understanding how we got where we are and knowing what the problem is. The other part of our job is to build the muscles of our imagination so that we can begin to create something new. **Here are some tools for doing both of those things:**

Understanding History Tool: Things to read

- Read these things:
 - From MPD 150 (FB/IG: @mpd150)
 - [FAQ](#) about a police-free future
 - [10 Ideas for Building a Police-Free Future](#)
 - [5 Essential Findings](#)
 - [The Future Beyond Policing](#)
 - From Rep. Aisha Gomez:
 - [This is why we talk about police abolition](#)
- Consider hosting a book club with one of these books:
 - *A Good Time for the Truth*, a collection of essays about race in Minnesota
 - *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander
 - *How to be an Anti-Racist*, Ibram X. Kendi
 - *Stay Woke: A People's Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter*, Tehama Lopez Bunyasi, Candis Watts Smith
 - *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Carol Anderson
 - *The End of Policing*, Alex Vitale
 - *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Angela Davis

Imagining What's Next Tool: Questions to spark the imagination

- Here are some [inspiring images](#) to get us thinking about safety beyond policing.

Imagining What's Next Tool: The things we might need to get there

- Tools for reaching out to the Minneapolis City Council about reimagining public safety
 - [Here is a South Minneapolis parent's letter to her Council Member.](#)
 - Neighborhood specific petitions to City Council members are being created. Here are petitions for the [Kingfield Neighborhood](#), [Ward 12 \(Longfellow and surrounding neighborhoods\)](#), and [Logan Park neighborhood](#). Contact us if you want one created for your neighborhood.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Listen to and follow the lead of BIPOC organizations

Black and indigenous leaders and leaders of color in Minnesota have been working for a long time to defund MPD and reimagine community safety. Support these organizations, read their materials, and follow them on social media.

You don't need to wait for a leader of these organizations to tell *you specifically* to take action. These leaders have been calling for action for years. Listen clearly, and take thoughtful action in the community that you are connected to.

[Black Visions Collective](#) @blackvisionscollective

[Reclaim the Block](#) @reclaimtheblock

[MPD 150](#) @mpd150

This work in the time of COVID-19

Our actions are complicated by COVID-19, and we urge people to take care of themselves and observe protocols for COVID-19 safety. Immune system vulnerabilities may not be obvious, so we don't want to judge people's different levels of comfort. Instead, let's work to make things accessible in many ways - using masks, social distancing, opportunities for digital action, and online platforms like [Zoom](#) for meetings and connections.

Getting help and support

Questions? Need a specific tool for your organizing that you don't see here? Email amanda@takeactionminnesota.org. We'll be continuing to add to and edit this toolkit as the situation evolves.