

## **NEIGHBOURS - 1**

### ***WHAT IS THE NEIGHBOUR TRADITION?***

Obviously, to be a good neighbour, to be friendly and help each other - sometimes even to become friends. In a place like a small village or the average street in Britain up to the end of the 1950s, everyone knew everyone and most ordinary people had a common code of interaction.

### ***WHAT BREAKS UP THE NEIGHBOUR TRADITION?***

When people of a different cultural tradition move in over you (flats) or next door to you (houses). This does not necessarily mean foreigners - it could be generational. Suddenly the woman of the house doesn't want to go out into her back garden because the males next door see you as breaking *their* cultural norms about being seen in your shorts without anything on your head. Or your new neighbours are noisy juveniles with no respect for your desire to lead a calm life, with normal sleeping hours.

***WHAT ACTION TO TAKE?*** There are two paths - either to keep a low profile, becoming invisible and have nothing to do with them, or to attempt to build bridges - but it takes two to tango.

### ***WHAT WORDS OF WISDOM SHOULD I AFFIRM TO MYSELF?***

I am entitled to privacy in my own home, and to lead my life according to my own traditions, even if I become isolated. I should not automatically think the newcomers are alien -I should try to be friendly and find out more about them, to see if we have points in common, BUT having found we don't like each other, it's best to keep at arm's length, to be civil if I pass them in the street, but no more than that.

In the past when I moved into a new place I would automatically go and introduce myself to my neighbours, and as time went on would invite them to tea now and again so we could catch up on local gossip and build up good will. Since 1990 these approaches have been met with blank stares and absolutely no response - either because the neighbours concerned were a younger generation, or immigrants, neither of whom could care less about building bridges with their neighbours, having absolutely no sense of the manners and graces of how to politely acknowledge each other's existence!

### ***CONSEQUENCES***

No problem if we establish a good relationship, but if we don't, then I'm going to have to be discreet about my movements and the noises I make because they will do what you do, and then try to push the boundaries further. But they should know they are waking me up every night, to give them a chance to modify their behaviour - and also to know that *I* am making efforts to be quiet for *them*. I ask them to use earphones when listening to music because I am doing the same for them. If they won't do that for me, I will not do that for them. I am not going to let them think they can walk over me without pushing back. Give as good as you get, but avoid direct reactions in a tit-for-tat tussle, as this is how the situation can escalate and become spiteful - in fact, this is how world wars start!

### ***OVERALL CONCLUSION***

If my neighbours make me unhappy, I don't have to give in to their standards: I will continue to maintain my own way of life as much as I can. If I have to make a complaint I will do so, without being hostile. But it is better to keep some kind of direct contact rather than start a war via third parties - but at times there is no avoiding appealing to letting agencies or solicitors.