

How to  
**feel more alive**  
by connecting with your neighbors

A 3-Part Guide  
for Growing a Village While  
Feeling Your Soul.

**PART 3: Start With One.**

# **How to Feel More Alive by Connecting with Your Neighbors: A 3-Part Guide for Growing a Village While Feeding Your Soul.**

MARY-ELIZABETH HARMON, PhD  
Founder, Village Company 360

## **ABOUT VILLAGE COMPANY 360:**

### **Vision**

We imagine a world in which all people have the necessary love, services and supports to prosper—to feel alive—from birth to beautiful death.

### **Mission**

To inspire wonderful places to grow up and grow old by fostering caring communities and caring economies for and by neighbors.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Welcome message.....	5
Get clear by committing to something in “public” .....	7
Monitor how you feel to correct “almost right” sooner.....	8
Gain confidence and new clarity by trying new things.....	9
“Wonderfulize” the future by telling shameless tales.....	10
Move past fear by getting frank about what it is.....	11
Closing message.....	12
A kind request.....	13

**DISCLAIMER:**

This document is for informational purposes only.

By continuing to read / use this you acknowledge that Village Company 360 cannot guarantee any particular results, such as outcomes that are based on subjective factors that are not within our control. Therefore, following any information or recommendations provided here is at your own risk.



Clarity brings  
prosperity.

— Joel Fatinos



**You know me by now:**

**Dr. Mary-Elizabeth Harmon, scientist turned storyteller, caregiver & founder of Village Company 360.**

When I moved into my former condo, I had questions.

But there wasn't anyone around to give me answers except for a security guard who scribbled some information on a paper towel.

Though thankful for his help, I thought, *Nah, this ain't gonna cut it.*

But here's my take on situations like that:

**Thinking things like, “This won't cut it,” or “Someone ought to [do X],” is a clear sign that we're good candidates to respond.**

Rather than wait for “someone” to do better at sharing information, I hung a sign-up sheet for my neighbors promising to send building and neighborhood news.

The result?

Over time, I collected around 100 email addresses in a building of about 100 units.

In other words, I'd tapped into something that my neighbors wanted.

As for me, I was feeling socially isolated as a newbie in Atlanta and wanted friends.

So I thought about who else might be feeling that way and volunteered to visit and do chores for ill and older people, and was matched with a woman named Barbara.

Barbara and I liked each other but were interested in different things.

And the trip to and from her house ate up a lot of time. When she moved out of town, I decided to stick closer to home and try to make friends with neighbors.

## Welcome Continued...

My building had a beautiful rotunda calling out to host events.

I answered by organizing a happy hour, which inspired me to host other things.

My experience is that neighbors are eager to connect with other neighbors.

But they're waiting for that elusive "someone" to make the first move.

By reading this, I'm guessing you're inclined to be "someone" if you aren't already.

When I've chosen to be "someone," I didn't wait to feel as if I knew what I was doing to get started. I simply made a promise and did my best to keep it.

And I was honest when I couldn't or if I decided to change my mind.

Being "someone" allows us to change direction.

All we do is to be open about it with folks who might be affected.

This is the final part of *How to Feel More Alive by Connecting with Your Neighbors*.

Here, I'm sharing bite-sized stories about how my former neighbors helped me to find clarity that I bring to the work I do now, and how I imagine newer neighbors might help me to gain confidence and grow into the village catalyst I'm eager to be.

May these stories give you ideas and help you be who you're inspired to be.

**"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.**

**Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."**

\*

**"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find  
all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."**

RUMI

Creating satisfying connections with neighbors (or anyone) is an inside-out job. But dissolving the barriers to love / connection within us is a lifelong pursuit, so our best way forward is to commit to doing the best outer work we can at any moment.

# “People don't want to commit until they have clarity, but clarity comes with movement.”

MICHAEL HYATT

## Get clear by committing to something in “public.”

By “public” I mean committing in front of two or more neighbors.

If in doubt about what to do, ponder how to scratch your own itch.

Like I said, I was itching for information about my building and neighborhood, so I committed to supplying it. I didn't have a plan for how, but wound up...

- Going to community meetings and sharing my notes by email.
- Sharing neighborhood news that I got from a local nonprofit.
- Creating a welcome guide for new and existing neighbors alike.

To scratch my itch for making friends, I hosted events and helped with projects.

Wanting to be free to say what I wanted in and about my building, I decided against joining my condominium association's board of directors. But we worked closely together, and they blessed me as the building communicator.

I did, however, say yes to joining the board of my neighborhood association.

And each time I said yes to something, I saw other things that I could do.

Pick one thing—“big” or “small”—that you can say yes to in your neighborhood.

Think about what makes you feel alive, not what your neighborhood needs.

# “Discernment is...telling the difference between right and almost right.”

CHARLES SPURGEON

## **Monitor how you feel to correct “almost right” sooner.**

In [Part 2](#), I said that I went off course workwise by asking what the world needed and how to make the best of my background in biology. Still, my job as a federal analyst was “almost right” in that I worked for the public good and was paid well.

My volunteer work to strengthen my neighborhood was also “almost right.”

While “almost right” may not sound that bad, it was draining my life force.

At work, I felt muzzled and disconnected from the “everyday” folks I was there to serve. And at home, I was feeling misaligned with most of the folks I was serving.

Despite all that, I couldn’t imagine what else to do and was floundering trying to change things. Life intervened with the health crisis that I mentioned in [Part 1](#).

Together with learning about (and believing in) our inherent and infinite creative potential, I felt ready to leave my job to go resuscitate and reinvent myself.

## **What “almost right” things can you correct before they force you to respond?**

This isn’t asking you to quit your job or do anything drastic. It’s asking you to take time to feel how you *really* feel about things, and to ask yourself what you can do immediately to start making things that feel almost right, feel good.

“Those small things that make us uncomfortable help us build courage to do the work we do.”

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

**Gain confidence and new clarity by trying new things.**

Before I left my job, I considered becoming a life and / or health coach. Once jobless, I gave myself time for my pulse to return and started a combo life-health coaching group with a few neighbors in my living room.

The results were good for them—reduced weight and sugar cravings—but I was freaking out because something was off and my money was drying up.

It was while losing my condo that two important things happened:

1. I learned—and believed—that our desire to be, do or have anything is at its core a desire to feel good, or at least better.
2. I stumbled on Howard Thurman’s quotation not to ask what the world needed but to ask what made me come alive.

Without much more than my house to lose, I experimented with those ideas.

By seeking aliveness, I remembered that I loved to tell stories and overcame my jitters about sharing my creative writing by self-publishing a book and blogging.

And now, I find joy in doing life and health coaching through writing stories.

**What’s something that you can try on for size with help from your neighbors?**

You only need a few to say yes to your offer.

# “True prosperity—*aliveness*—starts with stories.”

THAT’S ME, MARY-ELIZABETH, Y’ALL!

“**Wonderfulize**” the future by telling shameless tales.

If it weren’t for my sisters, I wouldn’t have had a roof over my head for many years. I felt like a total failure and hid, even from my friends.

Writing was one thing that gave me pleasure, and I got a wacky idea:

To write a Wikipedia page describing my super successful (and made up) career!

I did not. hold. back. one. bit.

I was a best-selling author whose books improved the lives of countless people worldwide. I started a profit-sharing planet- and worker-friendly fashion brand. I built affordable housing, community centers and fresh food markets.

I won a MacArthur Award, a Presidential Medal of Freedom and Nobel Prize.

As I grew as a person and did better at untangling my self-worth from my work, my Wikipedia pages took on a different tone and I noticed something startling:

I’d been making progress on certain things without actively trying.

My current imaginary story tells the tale of me as a rousing public speaker! I feel nervous about that but plan to gain confidence by practicing with neighbors. 😊

What GREAT-FEELING stories will you write about your life and neighborhood?

Have fun with it and don’t censor yourself.

Write in the present tense as if it’s already happening.

Writing bullet points is fine and you can use these prompts:

“I’m so [happy or however you want to feel] now that [fill in the blank].”

“It’s so wonderful now that [fill in the blank].”

# “All fear is a fear of feeling.”

OREN HARRIS

## Move past fear by getting frank about what it is.

Just as our desire to be, do or have anything is at its core a desire to feel good, or better, our avoidance of our desires is at its core an attempt not to feel bad.

Naturally, I want to succeed in the work I'm doing. But when the fear of failing rears its head, it isn't because I fear needing a dead-end job to make ends meet, but that I'll feel embarrassed from trying but messing up.

Though I was ill and cried in the shower before work, a bigger thing that helped me to leave my job was thinking about whether I was willing to deal with what might happen if I couldn't generate income as a coach while working part-time.

Blessed with a family safety net, I thought that losing my condo would be the worst-case scenario. And I preferred to lose a condo than my will to live.

Now, I prefer to risk feeling embarrassed than dying with my inspirations untried.

Sooo, it turned out that the worst was much worse than losing my condo.

BUT the beauty of that is that now I have fodder for a best-selling book to touch people across the world (woohoo!) and I wouldn't have gained the fortitude, wisdom or vision to do my village work—my *soul* work.

## What feeling is beneath the fear holding you back from what your soul wants?

I know that not everyone has a family safety net for added courage. So I'm telling the tale of safety nets for all woven strong with neighbors!

I hope you're excited to join me on a journey to make that world a reality.

It won't happen overnight, but starting with one step can.

If you take one thing from  
this series, let it be this:

If we're clear on our INTENTIONS and use our ATTENTION to feel as good as we can emotionally (which is easier to do if we feel good physically), life has a funny way of steering us toward our desires. But it just might take us on a zig zaggy route!

# Friends, it has been a pleasure.

That's it for the *How to Feel More Alive by Connecting with Your Neighbors* series. Making this was a labor of love, and I'd appreciate you sending me an email with a few words or more letting me know what you think:

**Hello@VillageCompany360.com**

Sincerely,  
Mary-Elizabeth

For your convenience, [click here](#) to access all parts of the series in one place.

**Did someone share this with you?**

If so, and you aren't signed up to get mail from me,  
please do so [here](#).