

Helping neighbours is good for communities and your health

Dr. Alexandra Greenhill says we're hesitant to ask our neighbours for help, so we don't do it often

By Liam Britten, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 22, 2016 9:36 PM PT Last Updated: Apr 22, 2016 9:36 PM PT

Don't be afraid to borrow a cup of sugar: a Vancouver physician says asking for help with daily tasks from your neighbours can make you happier and healthier.

However, Dr. Alexandra Greenhill says we're often hesitant to ask our neighbours for help, so we don't do it very often.

"[Asking for help] was commonplace in the past because we got to know each other a little bit better, but now that we are so mobile and active and constantly moving from neighbourhoods and cities, we don't know each other that well," she told [On The Coast](#) guest host Gloria Macarenko.

"Over the years we've fallen out of the habit of helping each other out."

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Greenhill says research shows most people are willing to help out their neighbours when they're in need; but on the flip side, very few people are willing to ask for help because they don't want to impose.

Reasons why people don't ask for help

As a physician, Greenhill's interest in this area was spurred on by the health implications. She says asking for help is one of the most misunderstood things about what keeps us healthy.

She says there are several reasons why people don't ask for help, including:

- Fear of imposing.
- Fear of not having it done the way it should be.
- Fear of not being able to thank them.
- Fear of owing the person.

Ultimately, Greenhill says, we should work past these fears, because being able to get help from friends and neighbours could be an important way to reduce stress, which she says is the root of many health concerns.

"The majority of our stress is caused by daily little situations where we feel out of control. Where we feel under pressure," she said. "People who are better supported don't have as many side effects from the stress."

Greenhill says if you find yourself unable to accept help, start off just by saying yes when it's offered, and go from there — even if saying yes is outside your comfort zone.

Greenhill will be speaking at [TEDx East Van](#) Saturday at the York Theatre about her ideas and research.

With files from CBC Radio One's [On The Coast](#)

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