



**YSM**  
YONGE STREET MISSION

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# HOW TO HELP A STREET-INVOLVED NEIGHBOUR

YSM Guide

**Step 1:**  
**Say *hello* to your neighbour**

Street-involved community members often feel invisible. Here are some actions you can take each time you see a neighbour in need to show them you see them.

- Make friendly eye contact.
- Say “good morning” or another pleasantry if you are passing by.
- If you see the same neighbours regularly, take time to learn their names.
- If a neighbour requests your help, pause and listen.



**Be Prepared to Support a Neighbour**

Consider carrying \$5 gift cards to local coffee shops, coupons to restaurants, granola bars or little toiletry bags should you wish to help.



**Give Cash Without Judgement**

A common concern is if a neighbour might use cash to buy an addictive substance. Resist making assumptions and remember that addiction is a medical illness deserving of compassion.

**Step 2:**  
**Let a neighbour lead**

If a neighbour asks you for help, find out what they want or need. They might request spare change, a meal or drink, helpful items, or they may simply be looking for a conversation.

- Don't make assumptions about what a community member wants.
- Remain judgement free about how someone may spend money.
- Recognize street-involved neighbours know best what they need.

**Step 3:**  
**Offer help or politely decline**

If you are asked for help, only you can decide if you have the interest and resources to fulfill a request. It's ok if you don't — just politely let your neighbour know. Here are a few examples of what you can say:

If you have change in your pocket you're willing to share, you can say . . . *“I hope this helps!”*

If you don't have change but are willing to buy something, you can say . . . *“I don't have change, but can I pick up something you'd like from here?”*

If you don't have an interest in helping, you can say . . . *“I'm sorry, I can't help today.”*

If a neighbour hasn't asked but you'd like to offer help, you can say . . . *“Can I pick you up something you need today?”* or *“Would you like this [gift card to a coffee shop]?”*



**Support Neighbours in Crisis**

If you are approached by a neighbour in crisis, ensure your own safety first. If necessary, call your community's non-emergency services line (3-1-1 in Toronto) or an ambulance.

**Step 4:**  
**Learn about and support local services**

Many street-involved neighbours find shelter, food and care at local community agencies like YSM. You can help connect them to find support.



Learn about community agencies in your neighbourhood. Find out if they have referral cards you can share. [Download YSM's Evergreen Centre for Street-Involved Youth card.](#)



Become familiar with Toronto's 3-1-1 or your community's non-emergency services line. You can call them to connect neighbours to shelters and more. [Find out more here.](#)



Donate to or volunteer with a food bank, meal program or shelter in your community that street-involved neighbours rely on. [Donate to YSM.](#)



**Support Neighbours in Public Spaces**

For your and your neighbours' safety, only offer help in public spaces. Do not bring neighbours into your home — instead, help find community services that offer shelter and support.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN SUPPORT ALL OF OUR NEIGHBOURS AND CREATE FRIENDLIER COMMUNITIES FOR EVERYONE!**

To learn more, visit [www.ysm.ca/how-to-help-a-street-involved-neighbour](http://www.ysm.ca/how-to-help-a-street-involved-neighbour)