

CHAPTER 6: NFH Syndrome

Excerpt from *Neighbors From Hell*, by Bob Borzotta
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Dealing with an ongoing war with an enemy – yes, an *enemy* – positioned right beside us, is gut-wrenching. It deserves its own psychological distress category, like Neighbor Rage or Community Anxiety Disorder. I've come to call the stress disorder caused by the harshest neighbor conflict situations "NFH Syndrome." It's not like road rage or having a bad boss or a nasty breakup – it's easier to move on from other negative experiences than it is to get beyond NFH Syndrome.

Before ultimately prevailing against Neighbors From Hell, we may experience great paranoia and self-destructive thoughts. I came to believe my first ones wanted me dead, and I was probably right. Their own untimely passing would not have caused me tears. Wanting bad neighbors to suffer is becoming more and more normal. When your neighbors are hellish, the systems designed to protect you fail you, and you can't afford to battle them with high-tech cameras and lawyers, our innate instinct toward violence can be a 50-cent cab ride away.

Short of going quite that far, inflicting property damage or bringing other harm to a bad neighbor is what victims turn to, and my research shows this is growing.

While it's not condoned, it's understandable. You can have good health, a great job, lots of money, healthy relationships with the important people in your life, and all your ducks lined up in a row, and Neighbors From Hell can infect your mental and physical being like a cancer, changing you for the worse.

Being in a crowded movie theater in front of someone kicking your seat and behind someone who keeps talking still outranks staying home on a night when the Neighbors From Hell are having a party. The harsh outside world, shelter from which traditionally is found in our homes, can become *preferable to our own home* when it's the scene where a hostile conflict drags on – that's the essence of how bad neighbors can destroy the livability of nearby neighbors' homes and change us at our cores.

Lacking positive relations with someone who lives near us – even while the rest of the community can be counted among our friends – is distressful. In a situation that sees a threat of violence – or one that merely involves defiant, trashy creatures who stare us down and speak against us to others – we lose a feeling of safety, of well-being – the traditional benefits of a home and community life.

Some of the outcomes of neighbor-related stress and misery qualify as legacies more than as short-lived results. They include chronic headaches, gastrointestinal problems, sexual dysfunction, panic disorder, heart disease, blood pressure problems, alcoholism and abuse of prescription medication. Painful anxiety makes us abuse our bodies and minds, rendering us foolish enough to believe we can absorb it without long-term consequences.

There were times, during the heat of battle, I felt the world was my enemy, a self-fulfilling notion, as I lacked any kind of useful support and didn't really grasp what I was up against. In severe Neighbor-From-Hell matters, family life goes downhill, work productivity and creativity dry up, and every other aspect of our lives is impacted. Victims of the worst, most aggressive and malicious loud neighbors often feel under siege and beside themselves. In some cases, a hypersensitivity to noise develops, making even the ordinarily tolerable sounds coming from a neighbor unacceptable.

