



## Finding Herself & Personal Safety Nets

Our friend, Diane Venti, wrote to tell us . . .

"All my life I have been a person that was well connected and well supported; but after a series of transitions and a move to a new area, I found myself for the first time in my life without a network of friends and family. I felt terrified of the feeling of being 'alone in the world.'

In my new neighborhood I did the first thing I knew to do; I slowly started volunteering at my children's school, but I didn't know anyone and it seemed as if all the parents from the school had years of history with one another.

For a person who has always believed in 'community' I felt like a total failure. How could I have reached middle age and be without a network?

One day Gena - one of the moms that I had gotten to know - brought me lunch at work because she said she was worried about my apparent depression. She offered to come once a week to visit me and bring a picnic lunch and just visit. She was my first glimmer of hope. While we were visiting she told me "You have all the tools you need to rebuild your life, now you just need a safety net." I had no idea what she was talking about . . . 'what on earth is a safety net' I wondered. I felt she didn't truly comprehend my plight.

In an effort to explain, she sent me a link to the Personal Safety Nets Newsletter, and it was the missing puzzle piece to my dilemma.

The Personal Safety Net philosophy was everything I already instinctively knew and believed in, but had forgotten due to fatigue and loss.

I started by reading the entire newsletter and then phoned the PSN office to ask if they had any local workshops scheduled that I could attend. The workshops and support of the PSN team re-ignited my belief that a 'net' is simply part of a 'network' - but it was my job to sew it together.

Safety nets are a reciprocal creation; they are the meshing of needs and assets; giving and getting. Once you start crafting your net, it grows exponentially.

I assigned two people to be my kids' emergency backups and offered to do the same for other people's kids. I traded house keys with 2 neighbors, I gathered phone #'s from neighbors and taped them up in the kitchen so that the kids felt protected. Next I stepped up my involvement with local non-profits with whatever talents and gifts I

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could share and I met truly high caliber giving people there who have become my friends.

The whole process snowballed and within a couple of years I can finally say I am no longer alone in my new town. I thank Personal Safety Nets for nudging me back into the community. My fear and isolation have been replaced by more than I dreamt of having again in my life. I never want to be a burden or a challenge for other people."

Diane went on to say . . .

"The challenge with the PSN concept for me now is accepting help. On the receiving end of an interaction, I feel guilt, shame, embarrassment, and worthlessness. Though I don't fall into common mindsets like resentment, or obligation and I never do things begrudgingly for others, and actually feel joyful doing for others, I have had trouble turning this around for myself.

What I've learned, in part through Personal Safety Nets, is to better apply this to myself. We all have gifts and needs, and the ability to match people up to fill those would be my full time job if I could. That is the fun of networking to me!"

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