



# Building Blocks of Personal Safety Nets

*The focus here is upon helping you understand and/or review the reasons for having and using a personal safety net. It's also an opportunity for you to reflect upon what power and opportunities await you as you make your life's journey smoother; discovering new motivations, reasons and benefits of building or re-building your community.*



**[1]Your Foundation:** We often celebrate what we call our own independence, while neglecting to see the value that exists in interdependence. **When we learn to accept help from others without overwhelming them in any way, we've taken a big step!** None of us will go through life without a change or challenge that exceeds our own personal resources - so why wait to start identifying where you'd turn IF something arose? **Yes, you can choose the path of engagement - deliberately building plans and resources - a strong personal safety net - right now.**

### Some tips:

- 1) *understand and value the diverse skills of yourself and others;*
- 2) *make regular contact with others by phone, text, email and in person;*
- 3) *share and clearly state your commitment to each other.*

**Power and You:** It's easy for most of us to feel powerless when things in our lives change rapidly. It's natural to focus on all we've lost and the challenges ahead. **But by building up your Personal Safety Net you emphasize the personal power you possess** - which is inherent in the many choices that exist for you: You can ask for help, You can gather information, You can choose whom to tell, You can invite the opportunity for others to learn, You can say "no" when it's appropriate. **Remember, it is your life. You have the power to learn, share and move ahead.**

**Communicating:** When thinking of a personal safety net - whether creating or evaluating yours or someone else's- you'll want to make sure it's well-supported and available when needed. **Some tips to help:**

### First, acknowledge and nurture the people and resources you do have:

1. *Make a list of the people that you've turned to (or could turn to) - whether for big things (help with moving) or small (a smile at the bus stop).*
2. *Appreciate the different gifts.*
3. *Let them know.*
4. *See what you can offer in return.*
5. *Find ways to laugh and/or celebrate.*

**Second, identify areas where more support would be good and try to diversify. To do this, you can**

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- [Get Started](#)
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### consider inviting:

1. *People who are friends, but not best friends*
2. *Those who are not family members*
3. *Family members of different generations*
4. *Friends of family, friends and neighbors.*



**[2]A Balanced Life:** To paraphrase the words of Sheldon Solomon, professor of psychology at Skidmore College "Stress is when the demands on an individual are greater than the resources. With time, education and outside help, this balance can always change." **Even when all is in chaos, you'll be better able to remain calm and to experience better results if you've put effort into creating a plan, a Personal Safety Net, to guide your response.**

The effectiveness in our Personal Safety Nets is similar to the effectiveness of a fire department. It is both an individual and team effort and involves multiple ingredients.

**Moving Ahead:** Sometimes it's time to "prune" your personal safety net. **You may not realize it but this "pruning" may not only encourage new growth but will strengthen your personal safety net.**  
**Here are some ideas:**

- Cut those relationships that drain you or are no longer reliable.
- Listen to your gut - is something amiss? Is someone no longer able to help? Ask if they still want to participate. People sometimes say "yes" when they really ought to be saying "no."
- When pruning, remember that there will be more focus on what remains. It also allows for grafting on new parts.

**Pruning of people in your safety net is natural and respectful.** Honor with recognition what has been given. The end result is to have a stronger Personal Safety Net and a model for all participants. **As time progresses, rejoice in the new growth of old and new relationships.**



**[3]It's Your Life:** Are you part of someone else's personal safety net? If you are, **you should make it an experience that is positive and holds no resentment.** Here are some ideas for protecting everyone and enjoying yourself:

1. Do your best to offer and do those things that you can do willingly, and for only as long as you feel mostly good doing them. Setting a time limit can be really helpful.
2. Focus on those things about your friend that bring you joy or laughter - be they memories, conversations or activities you can enjoy together now.
3. Recognize that you are stepping into your friend's life, not creating it; and that if this becomes too much, you can, in fact must, step back. This is where an important choice exists, and seeing it as a choice often helps.
4. Also do some things that really take care of YOU.
5. In any case, find or create humor and perspective where you can, and this will help.

**Finally**, sometimes you have to say no to a request. While we've given you tips for protecting and enjoying yourself when helping others, we also ask that you **be conscious of the "how" when you're asking.** People ask us all the time: "When someone asks me to help them, and I say 'no' won't I hurt the feelings of someone I can for?" **Our advice is to look at the way you say "no." This is often the determining factor in the feeling you leave behind.** When you find yourself wanting to, or having to, or choosing to say "no" (remember, it's your life and your choice), you might try saying/adding:

- \* How much you would like to help, but why it is simply not possible right now
- \* Or why this particular task isn't one you'd do well.
- \* Help find alternative resources

You can add that you're really glad to have been asked, and hope you'll be asked for something else in the future.

### [CONTACT US](#)

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