



## Community Resources

**Community Resources:** The Community Resources we are referring to are those professionals, paid and unpaid, who address the needs of the community. These range from the highest paid lawyer or accountant to the Senior Center's free tax clinic. They include parole officers as well as arts organizations. Seeing what exists in YOUR community depends on where you live, on the network of trusted **friends and family** to give you referrals, and on your belief system and personal history to help you decide which would be appropriate for you.

Help keep this part of your Personal Safety Net organized by gathering and placing these things and your wishes in a place where you, and those you want to have the information, will be able to access it:

- Attorney's information
- Driver's license – copy
- Passport/Naturalization papers
- Personal Safety Net wallet card
- Spiritual guides and those I turn to for counsel

## 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**

- [Get Started](#)
- [Who We Are](#)



**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 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.

---

## Giving Helps – You!

- [Get Started](#)
- [Who We Are](#)



***Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Susan Skog, "The Give-Back Solution: Create a Better World with Your Time, Talents and Travel (Whether You Have \$10 or \$10,000.)"***

**For more info:** [www.susanskog.com](http://www.susanskog.com) [4]

There's a deep wave of grassroots giving back sweeping the country. A surge of people across all age groups is volunteering like never before. But giving back doesn't mean that you don't get anything in return. Helping others reach for a new day rejuvenates us in ways that another margarita-soaked vacation, more stuff, a fatter resume, or a supersized house can't begin to. We want to feel useful. We want to find meaning. We want to feel this alive and on fire with possibility. Here are some ways serving others can serve you--from finding your true calling to improving your health to boosting your overall sense of joy.

**Your Anxiety and Depression are Eased:** We all know that giving back helps others but is there any benefit for those who are giving the help? Many have said they experience a potent euphoria known as "helper's high" when you're helping. The neural "glow" from helping others even shows up on MRI scans. Boston College researchers found that pain, depression, and disability in chronic pain patients decreased after volunteering. University of Texas and other researchers also find that volunteering eases depression while helping us reach greater states of happiness and hope.

This sense of usefulness, optimism and meaning can banish your brooding thoughts and clear out the cobwebs in your minds. Why? For one thing, giving back helps you stop fixating on your troubles and propels you to feel empowered and confident that you can make a difference.

**Your Overall Health and Joy are Boosted:** Giving is simply, powerful medicine. Research shows that teenagers who get turned on by service learning and volunteer work are much happier and more optimistic. They also get better grades and use drugs less. Volunteering even helps you live longer, according to University of California–Los Angeles researchers. When you're helping others your entire being undergoes a feel-good transformation, which boosts everything from your psychological outlook to heart and immune system. When you're generous, you're generous to yourself.

**You Sharpen Your Job Skills and Attract Employers:** Even as unemployment spikes in the country, we're seeing a surge in volunteering. What's going on? While we're seeking a job, we want to roll up our sleeves and make a difference. Now we have more time to give back – plus, that service keeps us optimistic that things will get better and primes us beautifully for our next, best job. Volunteering offers great experience, a chance to sharpen or learn new skills, and stay in the game – all increasingly desirable traits to any future employer. Additionally, people who volunteer are resourceful, creative, – and have incredible staying power on the job.

**You Stay Hopeful and Optimistic:** "I've never felt such an amazing sense of community," says Amanda Anderson-Green, a then twenty-five-year-old medical researcher from Seattle who spent three weeks on a Cross-Cultural Solutions volunteer vacation in Ghana through Travelocity's Travel for Good program.

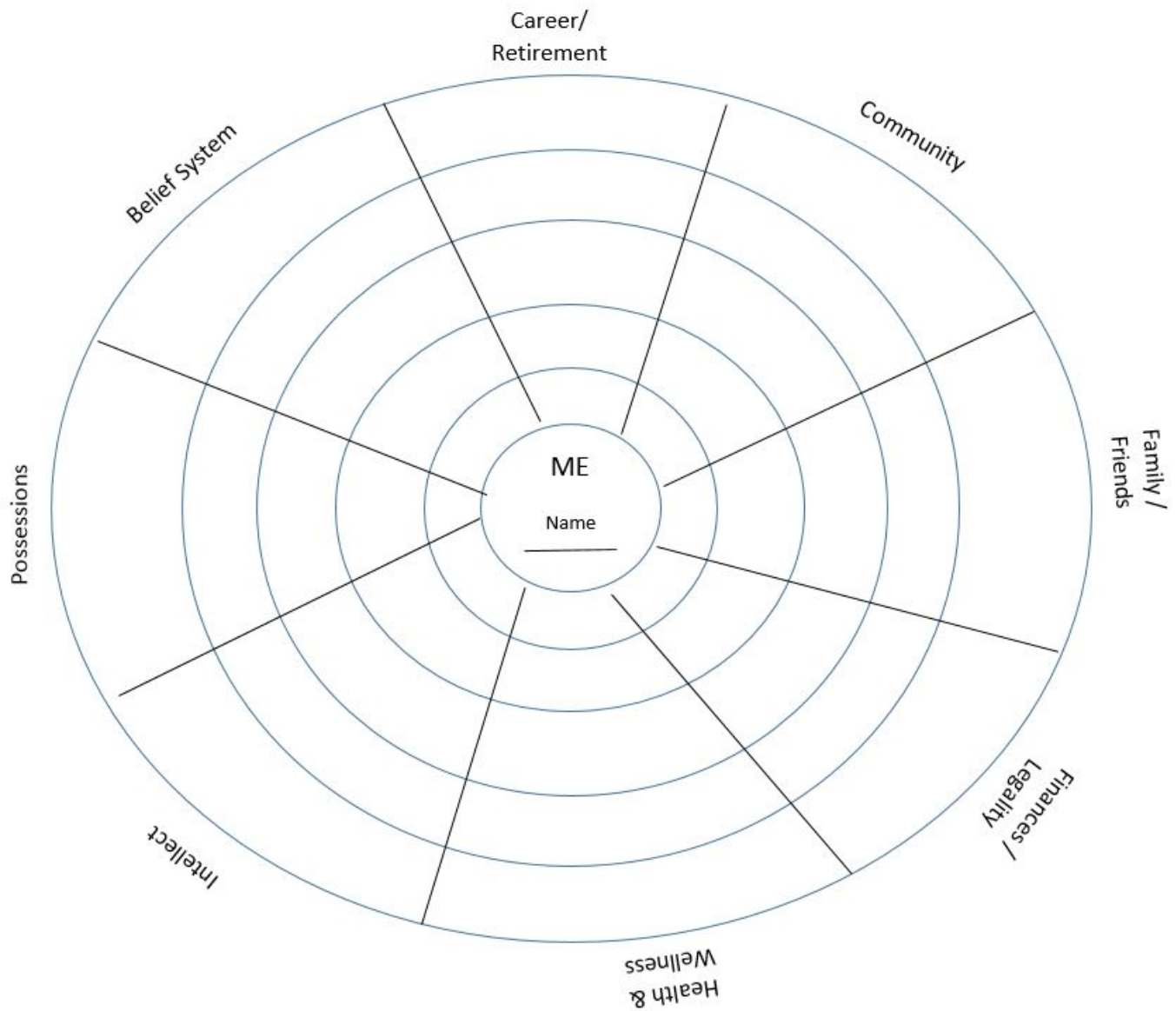
She went to volunteer at a center with HIV-positive people and AIDS orphans. "I was struck by the simplicity of it. People talked with me as if I was their neighbor. They were so open, friendly, and accepting. They'd put their arms around me and thank me for coming." Now back in Seattle, she says, "I am still receiving the gifts from my trip. I knew I would have a rewarding adventure, but I had no idea how much going abroad would impact my views of community, happiness, and service here at home."

**You Gain Appreciation for Other People and Places:** Jonathan Orc thought Africa was a very bad place: hot, poor, full of sickness and dirt. But he fell in love with people in Mali while teaching English and helping build a school. "We arrived at night, but they had been waiting for us all day long....I felt that I belonged there, like they were just saving a spot for me in their village the whole time. Before, I used to see Africa as a crappy place, but now I see it as a paradise... Africa is a beautiful and extraordinary place that changed my life."



## Identifying Safety Net Members

Use this page as a guide in deciding who might be in your potential personal safety net. Put yourself (or the person needing care/assistance) in the center, then let your mind travel toward the outside of the circle in each of the directions, adding names to each ring as you go.



## Join the Community or Resist?

**The situation you face seems daunting. You need help.** Maybe it's help picking up a child or someone to watch her when you're taking another child to a soccer game in the rain. Maybe you need help around the house while you recover from surgery. Maybe you're seeking someone to watch your home while you're away on vacation. Maybe you need some help while you get a new project off the ground. **The question, in any case, is: Where do you turn for help?**





[5]No matter what kind of help you need, a Personal Safety Nets® solution focuses on the concept of building a community of friends, family, experts, novices, organization members, permanent members and part-timers from which a care-share team can be called to assist when you need it, with different folks involved according to your needs and wants, and their availability. And, of course, you can be a member of other's teams, too. In an ideal world, it's a give-and-take situation for everyone's betterment.

But what can actually happen to us when someone asks for help in their time of trauma? Psychologists are studying our responses and the findings may shock you. **"Most people cannot tolerate the feeling of helplessness," says Jackson Rainer, professor of psychology at Georgia Southern University.** "And in the presence of another's crisis, there is always the sense of helplessness." **People are sorry to hear of another's crisis, but they are more relieved that the trauma did not happen to them, and this shame causes them to avoid the family or person in crisis.** "They might make sure they're never in a situation where they have to talk to the family directly," according to Rainer.

Awkwardness is another common reaction - not knowing what to say or do. Some say nothing; others blurt out awkward (but well-intentioned) comments. **The more vulnerable people feel, the harder it may be to connect.** "We all live in some degree of terror of bad things happening to us," says Barbara M. Sourkes, of the Stanford University School of Medicine. "Other people's reactions are multifaceted . . . the only certainty is that traumatic events change relationships outside the family as well as within it."

**Dr. Rainer calls this self-distancing "stiff-arming" - creating space from "it" happening to you - if bad things are happening to you and I stay away from you, I'll be safe.**



[6]But not all of us "stiff-arm." Dr. Rainer explains that true empathy inspires "instrumental aid." There are any number of tasks to be done, and they're as personal as your thumbprint. **If you really want to help a family in crisis, offer to do something specific: drive a carpool, weed the garden, bring a meal, do the laundry, go for a walk."**

So, next time someone asks for your help, or you hear of a friend or family member in need, don't be guilty of "pseudo-care," asking if you can do anything but not really stepping up. **If you really want to help, try emailing a list of tasks you could do and ask if any of them would be helpful to them. Keep a list of things you like to do handy for your own reference.**

**We've provided a list from our workbook, *Personal Safety Nets: Get Ready/Get Started*® that will help you see some of the many tasks that can be offered.**

Whether you need help directly, or need help to figure out what assistance to offer, Personal Safety Nets® is here to encourage, support and guide you. **Take heart, plan now, and don't be guilty of stiff-arming a friend!**



## Know What To Expect

**One Caregiver's Story** - "Over the last three months, **Karen** has become increasingly anxious and depressed. She never imagined that the events of the past four years would lead to this amount of stress. **Her 83-year-old mother, with hypertension, Alzheimer's disease, and rheumatoid arthritis, moved in, after a hospital stay related to complications from an enlarged bladder.**



**[7]As a single mom with one son in college, Karen's life is now consumed with the role of care coordinator and service provider.** In addition to working a demanding full-time job as a legal secretary, her days are filled with coordinating multiple health care providers, arranging transportation and home-delivered meals, managing multiple, complex medications and other health-related tasks, handling challenging behavior issues, and much more.

Although her mother attends adult day services three times a week, her cousin comes in during the other weekdays, and a home health aide or her son helps on weekends, **she is finding it difficult to balance everything and is exhausted at night. She can't even remember the last time she visited with her friends or spent time gardening.** Karen's job has some flexibility, but she has used up her vacation leave and now finds herself having to take time off without pay. That leads to even more stress because it is her salary that helps pay for her son's college tuition and keeps things afloat.

Through all of the visits with her mother to multiple health care providers, the arranging and patching together of services and supports while she is at work, and during and after several of her mother's hospital stays, **there was always an expectation, from others as well as herself, that she would be able to handle the situation, whatever it was, just fine.**

**Although she had been experiencing a bad cough for the past few weeks, she did not feel she had the time to have it checked. She was just too busy. Several days later she became extremely ill and collapsed at work.** Her initial thought was, "I am just tired." She was hospitalized for pneumonia. It was not until her own health scare that anyone asked her what she, **Karen, needed - not just to help care for her mother or her son, but also to care for herself."**

**Karen's story, taken from *Valuing the Invaluable: 2011 Update - The Growing Contributions and Costs of Family Caregiving*, by the AARP Public Policy Institute, illustrates some of the inherent personal costs to those 61.6 million family caregivers in the United States today.**

**Today's "average" caregiver is:**

- A 49-year-old woman who works outside the home.
- Spends an additional 20 hours per week providing unpaid care.
- Cares for a relative or friend.



- Up to 53 percent of these caregivers have little or no training or preparation.
- These unpaid contributors help our economy by adding value rated at \$450 billion in 2009 (up from \$375 billion in 2007).
- Contributes more to our economy than total Medicaid spending at the federal and state level.
- Contributes as much as the total sales of the three largest publicly held auto companies.
- Contributes 3.2 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.
- Contributes almost \$1500 for every person in the U.S.

**It cannot be stressed too strongly that those who take on this unpaid role risk the stress, physical strain, competing demands, and financial hardship of caregiving, and thus are vulnerable themselves.** An extensive body of research finds caregiving to have a profound and negative effect upon the caregiver's own physical and psychological health, increasing social isolation, and adversely impacting the quality of life and well-being. **State and federal health organizations now view family caregiving as an important public health concern!**



[8]What can and should be done? **The study calls for a change in the care-system to more of a "care team" where caregivers are no longer viewed as just a "resource" for loved ones;** rather, they are partners on the care team and recognized as individuals who may themselves need training and support. **For those of you who've read Personal Safety Nets® this will sound familiar! The AARP study is calling for creating personal safety nets® and teams from those safety nets to tackle issues as they are needed - something we've been championing for more than five years!**

As we say in Personal Safety Nets: Now is the time to start building your net and when you do, remember a few simple tips:

- Plan as best you can, but be prepared to encounter the unexpected.
- Remember it takes a whole community to support both a care partner and a caregiver - that is what the care-share team is created to do. More people tackling the situation will lead to more chances of success for all parties involved.
- Come upon all roles with the idea that those who often fare best are those who see themselves as in charge or their own health and who view physicians and caregivers as critical team members.
- **Ask for and accept help before there's a crisis. This is a huge favor for all involved.**
- Set aside some time to sit in a quiet place or turn attention inward to help recharge your care-giving batteries.
- Organize, appreciate and give back!

## Master List - Things to Add to a Personal Safety Notebook

### [A CHECKLIST TO GET YOU STARTED - FREE \[9\]](#)

Readers and workshops attendees often say, *"If you'd just put a list together of all the things I need to do and need to have, my life would be much easier, and part of my personal safety net would be much closer to complete."*

Well, it takes more than a list, although it is a way to get you on the road. So while we want you to read up and work on your skill base - learning to ask, learning to plan, and learning to use a group to accomplish goals and





needs - we hear your pain.

Therefore, here is a simple list to get you started. Print it out and start organizing and completing the check list to know that you'll be better prepared when those unexpected challenges and changes come your way.

*Not everyone will have or need every item on this Master List. Go through them now and every few years to keep current. Check to see if you have/need any, or all of these?*

- If so, **where** can it be found/ where is the paperwork?
- **Who** else needs to know where they are? **Who** do you want to share it with?
- **What** do you need to do/have/prepare to be able to share?
- **When** do you want to share it?
  - **Note: some items may appear on more than one list. Items are in alphabetical order.**

[Download Your PSN Checklist](#) [10]

## Paying It Forward

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Psychology Today, July 18, 2006*

As life dragged on after her best friend Lynda Drabek's funeral, Charlene Moser took a novel approach to keeping the pain at bay: She carried out small acts of kindness. The good deeds she chose—paying for the drive-thru customer behind her, for instance—were things Lynda, a lifelong altruist, had done. "She would go through her address book, pick someone at random and write a card to them—no occasion, just because," Moser recalls.

At first, being the Good Samaritan wasn't easy. Both recipients and intermediaries—the drive-thru cashiers, for instance—were suspicious of her motives. Still, any resistance paled compared to the satisfaction Moser felt when someone smiled or thanked her for her efforts. But are these acts just nice deeds, or can altruism really create lasting satisfaction?

In 2005, Stanford University psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky decided to put the kindness-fulfillment connection to the test. She asked students to carry out five weekly "random acts of kindness" of their choice, anything from buying a Big Mac for a homeless person to helping a younger sibling with schoolwork.

Her results indicate the Scrooge effect is no myth. The students reported higher levels of happiness than a control group, with students who performed all five kind acts in one day reaping the biggest rewards by the end of the six-week study period. Previous studies have found that altruistic people tend to be happy, but Lyubomirsky's was the first to establish that good deeds are actually the direct cause of an increase in well-being.

Why is being generous such a mood-booster? While hard-and-fast answers are elusive, the main reason is that it gives people a strong sense they're doing something that matters. "There are a lot of positive social consequences to being kind—other people appreciate you, they're [grateful](#) [11] and they might reciprocate," Lyubomirsky says. All of these responses, she adds, are likely to make your happiness cup run over. In another study, she found that people who felt most strongly that others appreciated their efforts reported the biggest boost.

New Jersey rabbi Shmuel Greenbaum can testify to the ways kind acts reshape the self-image. After his wife, Shoshana, was killed by a suicide bomber in Israel in 2001, Greenbaum decided to respond by carrying out small acts of kindness each day—and gradually felt his anger and apathy dissolve, replaced by a strong sense of purpose.



"Being kind helps you feel in control," Greenbaum says. "By doing a good deed, you're saying, 'Here's something I can do to change the world.' "

Of course, real-world kindness bears little resemblance to sunshine-and-lollipops cliches. For starters, not all good deeds promise equal returns. Passing out smiley-face stickers or leaving lucky pennies on the sidewalk may not yield fulfillment, according to Jonathan Haidt, a University of Virginia psychologist and author of *The Happiness Hypothesis*. Instead, he recommends choosing deeds that strengthen existing social ties, such as driving to visit your grandmother. "If you do a random act of kindness for a stranger and it's a one-shot deal, there's much less likelihood that you're going to see any benefit," he says. "It's not the altruism per se that's important. It's really all about building relationships."

Lyubomirsky's work reveals another potential kindness pitfall: Like almost any other activity, being nice gets boring after a while. In a companion study, she found that participants who varied their acts of kindness—volunteering at a library one day and hosting a surprise party for a friend the next, for instance—reported bigger increases in mood than those who repeated the same act over and over. "You need variety or else it gets monotonous," she says. "It becomes a chore, like doing the same run every day." To experience kindness as a natural high rather than drudgery, she suggests brainstorming creative, unexpected good deeds, like surprising your nephew with a new Super Soaker or returning to your old high school to visit a teacher who inspired you.

It's easy to resolve to be a kinder person, but translating intention into reality is another matter entirely. To make sure your commitment doesn't weaken, Haidt advises using a marathoner's strategy: partner up. "Try joining a volunteer outfit where you form ties. That's easier to sustain than being a 'kindness guerrilla' working on your own."

Though Charlene Moser started out as an underground altruist, she eventually broadened her vision, wanting others to share in the joy she felt from doing good deeds. Three years ago, she founded Lynda's Legacy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging people to carry out acts of kindness.

### Need a Nudge?

Try one of these small acts to start your own kindness campaign:

- Pay the toll of the driver behind you.
- Shovel your neighbor's sidewalk after a snowstorm.
- Call or visit an older family member.
- Bake cookies for a neighbor.
- Give an extra-large tip.

## Seven Steps to Securing Help

**Define what's going on:** It's easy to feel uncomfortable when changes occur or things befall us, but if you don't tell people what's going on, how can you expect them to help?

1. **Get organized:** Try to create a needs list and/or organize what you specifically need, when you think you'll need it, and who might be able to help in different areas – make sure helpers or drivers or those assisting with a specific task all don't come on the same day!
1. **Ask for help:** It can be humbling in our individualistic society to admit we can't handle everything on our own. But if we don't ask for help, we're less likely to get it. Just remember, we all need to give, so give others a chance to participate. This is a tough task so practice, practice, practice. |
1. **Be specific in requests:** It's a lot easier for someone to respond if your request is clearly defined and they



know what you want or need, when it's wanted, and what you can accept. |

1. **Don't take "no" personally:** Sometimes people don't have the time to help, or they may shy away from a particular need. A request may bring up uncomfortable feelings, or can remind someone of their own problems and fragility. Either way, it's important not to take it personally when someone says no. |
1. **Learn to receive help graciously:** It can be harder than you think to let others help – it sometimes means giving up control or responsibility – and it takes practice to do this well. |
1. **Remain a giver:** While it's important to accept help graciously, it's also important, even through change, injury or illness, to continue to be givers. We can offer kind words, smiles, and a continued interest in our friends' lives. In fact, shifting some of our focus to others helps lift our spirits, an important part of moving ahead with our own lives.

## Resources:

## The Relationship Between Gifts & Community

Our readers are telling us they increasingly yearn for community. They say, "We don't want to live in a commodity world, where everything we have exists for the primary goal of profit. **We want things created for love and beauty, things that connect us more deeply to the people around us. We desire to be interdependent, not independent.**"



[12]The gift circle, referenced in [Charles Einstein](#) [13] along with many other forms of gift economy that are emerging on the Internet, are ways of reclaiming human relationships. A Personal Safety Net (PSN) helps us look at the various ways in which people and organizations lend what they have to give to support us in our lives. Conversely, a PSN helps us identify ways in which we support others. Our human need to connect through gifts within community needs nurturing. *Read on:*

"Wherever I go and ask people what is missing from their lives, the most common answer (if they are not impoverished or seriously ill) is "community."

**What happened to community, and why don't we have it any more?** For some community is nearly impossible because community is **woven from gifts**, (not purchased with dollars). The layout of suburbia, the disappearance of public space, the automobile and the television, the high mobility of people and jobs all contribute to the isolation people feel across economic levels. **It is a dependence on purchasing things and services which is ultimately why poor people often have stronger communities than rich people.**

If you are financially independent, then you really don't depend on your neighbors - or indeed on any specific person - for anything. You can just pay someone to do it, or pay someone else to do it. I need someone to do their jobs, but not the unique individual people. ~~They are replaceable and, by the same token, so am I.~~



That is one reason for the universally recognized superficiality of most social gatherings. How authentic can it be, when the unconscious knowledge, "I don't need you," lurks under the surface? When we get together to consume - food, drink, or entertainment - do we really draw on the gifts of anyone present? Anyone can consume. **Intimacy comes from co-creation, not co-consumption, as anyone in a band can tell you, and it is different from liking or disliking someone.**



**[14]To forge community then, we must do more than simply get people together. While that is a start, soon we get tired of just talking, and we want to do something, to create something. Community is woven from gifts.** People in gift culture pass on their surplus rather than accumulating it, your good fortune is my good fortune: more for you is more for me. Wealth circulates, gravitating toward the greatest need. **In a gift community, people know that their gifts will eventually come back to them, albeit often in a new form. Such a community might be called a "circle of the gift."**

We are poised at a critical moment of opportunity to reclaim gift culture, and therefore to build true community. The reclamation is part of a larger shift of human consciousness, a larger reunion with nature, earth, each other, and lost parts of ourselves. **We are not actually independent or "financially secure" - we are just as dependent as before, only on strangers and impersonal institutions, and, as we are likely to soon discover, these institutions are quite fragile.**

Alpha Lo, co-author of [The Open Collaboration Encyclopedia](#) [15], recommends *building community through something called the Gift Circle.*

- The ideal number of participants in a gift circle is 10-20. Everyone sits in a circle, and takes turns saying one or two needs they have: "a ride to the airport next week," "someone to help remove a fence," "used lumber to build a garden," "a ladder to clean my gutter," "a bike," and "office furniture for a community center."
- As each person shares, others in the circle can break in to offer to meet the stated need, or with suggestions of how to meet it.
- When everyone has had their turn, they go around the circle again, each person stating something he or she would like to give.
- Finally, the circle can do a third round in which people express gratitude for the things they received since the last meeting.
- This round is extremely important because in community, the witnessing of others' generosity inspires generosity in those who witness it. It confirms that this group is giving to each other, that gifts are recognized, and that my own gifts will be recognized, appreciated, and reciprocated as well.

Gift Circles: 1) reduce our dependence on the traditional market. If people give us things we need, then we needn't buy them; 2) reduces our production of waste; 3) hastens the demise of the present economic system in that any bit of nature or human relationship that we preserve is reclaimed from the commodity world."

This article was originally published in [Shareable](#) [16] -- an online magazine that tells the story of sharing that covers people, places, and projects bringing a shareable world to life. [Charles Eisenstein](#) [17] is a teacher, speaker, and writer focusing on themes of civilization, consciousness, money, and human cultural evolution. We've edited it for space and content. Click to read Eisenstein's entire piece.=-

**PSN Note: A few ideas related to circles aimed at reclaiming human relations and community that we're aware of include: [Timebanking](#) [18], [Resiliency Circles](#) [19], [Common Security Clubs](#) [20], and a variety of ideas featured in [YES! Magazine](#) [21].**



### [CONTACT US](#)

Unless otherwise indicated, all content on this site is licensed under a [Creative Commons 3.0 US License](#).

**Source URL:** <https://personalsafetynets.org/community-resources>

### Links

[1] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/155>

[2] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/156>

[3] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/157>

[4] <http://www.susanskog.com/>

[5] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/160>

[6] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/161>

[7] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/162>

[8] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/163>

[9] <http://www.personalsafetynets.org/content/checklist-get-you-started-free>

[10]

[https://personalsafetynets.org/sites/default/files/download\\_-\\_organizing\\_your\\_personal\\_safety\\_net\\_checklist.pdf](https://personalsafetynets.org/sites/default/files/download_-_organizing_your_personal_safety_net_checklist.pdf)

[11] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/gratitude>

[12] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/168>

[13] <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/a-circle-of-gifts/>

[14] <https://personalsafetynets.org/file/169>

[15] <https://opencollaboration.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/the-practice-and-theory-of-the-gift-circle/>

[16] <https://www.shareable.net>

[17] <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/a-circle-of-gifts>

[18] <https://timebanks.org>

[19] <https://localcircles.org>

[20] <https://www.sustainable.org/component/content/article/1183-common-security-clubs>

[21] <https://www.yesmagazine.org>