



Personal Safety Nets® e-Newsletter



Beliefs About Asking For Help

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Letters & Stories



Our friend, Sue Mackey, brought us a new item this month - one we thought you might find funny, interesting and all so true.

"Just read an email from a university professor friend of mine lamenting about her students, business majors, requiring instructions on **how to address an envelope**. Yes, the basics ... sender's return address goes in upper left corner and recipient's address in the middle, like this - a demo followed. **A quarter of her class did not have a clue** how to address an envelope.

Your Belief About Asking for Help

Let's start out this edition with you taking a minute to think about one of your core beliefs. Ask yourself, **how do you feel about seeking help from another? Do you ask?** Be very honest with yourself! Do you believe that seeking help undermines your independence and conflicts with your ability to be in charge of your own life, or do you believe we are social beings who need



to "ask" in order to cooperate with one another and ensure we grow and thrive?

There seem to be strong opposing views held by those who hold fast to maintaining personal independence ("I don't need help/never ask") and those who support gaining independence through interdependence ("Asking is good").

The first group often sees taking help from others as a weakness. It's a learned and ingrained pattern of thinking that may be hard to overcome. Research shows that the second group, those who support interdependence, are more likely to see asking as strength.

Still there can be discomfort with actually how to increase ease with asking.

At PSN, our goals include helping people understand the benefits of asking for help, and offering methods of being better prepared and able to undertake the task of asking for help. Too many of us run away from asking for help because it feels too difficult.

In this issue let's focus on the idea that seeking help is a sign of weakness. If you're in this camp, we're definitely out to change your mind! We want to help you overcome this belief and allow you to develop a **healthier sense of interdependence** with those around you.

Dig deep; consider exactly why - the reasons - you think asking for help is a





In one's personal life and business, unless I'm really prehistoric, sending a personal note, not an email, is an important part of me saying 'you matter' and 'I get it, life is not all about me.'

Certainly **learning ways to express gratitude and to acknowledge kindness, including a handwritten note, is fundamental and valuable in building a PSN and sustaining it."**

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The following story was written by Randy Woods in his NWJobs Career Center Blog (in The Seattle Times) the day before Christmas. Since it talks about this month's topic of asking, we thought it truly makes a point and would be worth sharing. It's been slightly edited with Randy's okay.

"For many job seekers, the search for a new place to work can feel like a long, lonely march. So much of the hard work is done in solitude -- filling out applications, making phone calls, reaching out to strangers, sitting in an interview room facing one or more hiring managers. Alone.



These days, however, no professional with a



sign of weakness. Do you feel that you're totally independent and don't need any help? Do you see any person offering you help as doubting your ability to remain independent? Are you frightened of rejection or have a tendency for perfectionism? Do you feel vulnerable when you have to seek help? Have you been let down in the past and have sworn never to let that happen again? Do you worry that

needing help serves as a sign of a lack of professionalism? Do you think that friends and family will see you as weak or inferior if you ask for help?

People who tell us they don't want to ask for help often use these as reasons. Their beliefs are reinforced in three ways; FIRST by movies, books and even games in which a hero gains the highest glory if he or she faces "impossible" problems and magically overcomes them on his or her own.

But most heroes have helpers, supporters and others, unacknowledged behind the scenes. Their success often depends on a lot of plain luck. These "helpers" may not be obvious but they are there, and a good hero benefits greatly from the assistance, advice and input of others.



The first step is to stop comparing yourself with such unrealistic portrayals of heroes.

SECOND: a common tendency is to think you "should" be able to cope alone and manage without help. This tendency to use "I should" presents a very unrealistic standard. Are you building an invisible barrier around yourself that wards off the potential for new relationships and friendships? Are you taking the opportunity to learn about the value of give and take, and the compassionate cycle of love, care, and generosity for all?

The expert in anything was once a beginner.

THIRD: the idea of your own expertise. Being trained in one field of expertise does not provide you with immunity from **continuing to seek help** from others within that same field or from other sources. You will be all the better for asking for help from others.

REACH OUT -- ASK!

We'll follow up next month with specific tips to make asking just a bit easier and more natural - a skill that need attention and practice. (If you'd like to go deeper, join us on March 29 and April 5 at Freedom Church: a 2-part series.

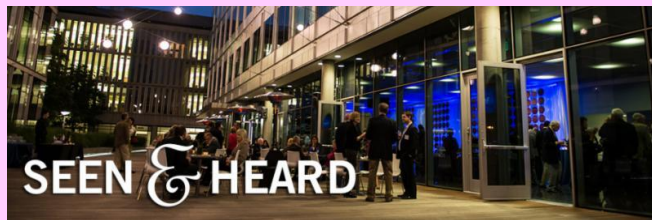
network is truly alone. Some just might not realize how much people are willing to help.

Earlier this month, some neighbors of mine learned, in dramatic fashion, about the **importance of connections within their network.** On the Sunday evening after Thanksgiving, my next-door neighbor had tied the last ribbon on all of the Christmas presents for her family. She and her husband are very organized and had done all of their shopping early for themselves and their 8-year-old son.

A few hours later, a spark of still-unknown origin started a small fire on their front porch and quickly spread to the outer front wall of the house. Eventually, the small fire hit a natural-gas pipe, which ignited and turned into a blowtorch. Within seconds, the entire front half of the house was engulfed in flames.



Fortunately, all three in the house escaped quickly and with only minor smoke inhalation. The fire department responded to the two-alarm blaze in less than five minutes, but all of the family's possessions, including the Christmas presents, were either consumed in the fire or ruined by water from the fire hoses. Their insurance will replace it all -- eventually -- but in the immediate aftermath, they had nothing



Group Singing - Makes Your Life Better:

Maybe it's because of the popularity of the television show *Glee*, but according to **Chorus America**, there are there are over 270,000 choruses across the country (everything from gospel groups to show choirs) with more than 32.5 million adults singing in those choirs, up almost 10 million over the past six years.

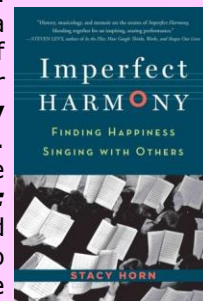
Researchers have been hard at work looking at these groups and have **found when you sing, musical vibrations move through you, altering your physical and emotional landscape** and group singing,



for those who have done it, is the most exhilarating and transformative of all.

A very recent **study** makes the case that "music evolved as a tool of social living," and that the pleasure that comes from singing together is our evolutionary reward for coming together cooperatively, instead of hiding alone, every cave-dweller for him or herself.

The benefits of singing regularly in a group seem to be **cumulative**, with researchers finding **lower stress levels, relief of anxiety and heart rates that sync up during group singing translate into a feeling of a guided group meditation.** **Dr. Julene K. Johnson**, a researcher and professor at the University of California at San Francisco, focuses on older singers, and has found an **improved quality of life** among those older choir members. Author **Stacy Horn** put together many of these findings in her book, ***Imperfect Harmony: Finding Happiness Singing With Others*** and **discusses** her findings in an NPR radio interview. It turns out that you don't even have to be a good singer to reap the rewards of group singing!



Invitation to a Movie:

Our friends at **NAVOS** are pleased to be collaborating with local film Producer/Director Delaney Ruston, MD, for a special screening of her **new film**

but the pajamas on their backs.

Within seconds, however, they realized that they were far from alone. **Families up and down the block sprang into action, providing shoes, coats, warm beverages and whatever they had available in the early-morning hours.** After dawn, neighbors lent their cars and their credit cards to go on a shopping spree so the family could have dry clothes.



A family they knew through their son's school offered their empty furnished house to stay in, rent-free, while they were traveling abroad. Kids on the block held bake sales to help replace the gifts. A secure website was set up inviting friends and neighbors to donate to a fund to help with family's living expenses. A 90-day goal of \$10,000 was set. Within two weeks, the total shot up past \$12,000 and continues to rise.

All of this giving affected the rest of us on the block as well. Families we used to give a polite nod to on the street now have names. We take time to stop and talk to each other a bit more and have exchanged contact information. As a result, a block-wide holiday party was arranged quickly so my neighbors could recover a little Christmas cheer that was stolen from them. **We are all a little stronger** because of it. It's hard to compare the

"Hidden Pictures" being aired nationally in PBS this spring.

You are invited to this special film screening - on Thursday, January 30, 2014 from 5 - 8 pm at **Big Picture Movie Theater**, 2505 First Avenue in Seattle. There is no charge, but **seating is limited to 100 people. You must be at least 21, and you must RSVP.**



Filmmaker Ruston experienced the silence that surrounds mental illness from her own family



experience. **When she learned that 450 million people globally have a mental health condition she realized their plight is the most hidden of all.** In **"Hidden Pictures"** Ruston takes us on her journey to answer these questions, uncovering deeply personal stories in India, South Africa, China, France and the U.S. Actress Glenn Close says of **"Hidden Pictures"** . . . "I found myself immediately pulled in and deeply moved by each of the stories it revealed. Global in its scope, but yet so personal in its delivery."

Help Us Continue The PSN Work

When Personal Safety Nets® began, the aim was to serve as a "social business" dedicated to helping others build their connections to a broader and more compassionate community. **Since we had always used all funding to advance our programs, it was natural for us to evolve into a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization under the IRS Code.** This transition occurred in 2013 and continues today through donations of people just like you who wish to support our mission.



Donated funds go towards our general operating budget and support our seminars, outreach and monthly newsletter. Help us inspire growth in our communities. A recent seminar attendee from North East Seattle Together (NEST) wrote to say, "Your presence, respect and clarity helped build community on the spot."



Through generous gifts from individuals such as you, **Personal Safety Nets® continues to carry the message "together we can learn to replace fear and isolation with security and connection"** throughout the greater Puget Sound region and the nation.

devastation of a house fire to the loss of a job. A fire is obvious and seemingly random, and it can affect an entire block; the loss of a steady income is silent and personal, and can be easily hidden. **But the shock and fear that these events generate are certainly similar.**

People are no less willing to help their neighbors out after a job loss than they are after a fire, but they have to know about it first. **Far too many job seekers -- out of a sense of pride or shame or guilt -- feel that they have to go it alone,** that they have to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. **But it is during a time of crisis, like a layoff, that network connections can be most useful.**



So . . . as we celebrate the warmth of family and the spirit of giving, **remember to reach out to your friends, neighbors and colleagues. Don't be afraid to ask for help while looking for work.** You never know where the next good job lead will come from. Sometimes it can be found right next door.

Share Your Story

We're Always Seeking Your Story

Tell us how you have (or haven't) dealt with a situation by building a network, or gathering with others to solve problems. Tell us what worked, or what didn't. **Sharing is a wonderful thing and your story will certainly be a helpful**

learning tool for many others!



Tell us your story by using your smart-phone to tell it to us and uploading your audio-story to **info@personalsafetynets.org.**