



Personal Safety Nets® e-Newsletter



Trust

March 2012, Issue 48

In This Issue

Who To Trust?

You ought to be in pictures!

Bits & Pieces

Avoiding Life's Hazards

Hot News!

Upcoming PSN Schedule

Who To Trust? For What? When?

Surveys reveal that Americans have, on average, very few trusted confidants in our lives. Forty years ago, we had six to seven, now it's two to three. **If you thought you were alone searching for trusting relationships, you're not.** You're in the majority. Now the question is **who can you trust and how do you know it?**



If you're like the majority of us, you start by entering into trust through emotions. **Someone is nice to you, you embrace nice, and equate nice with trustworthy. Big mistake! Nice is nice. Trust, however, is earned.**

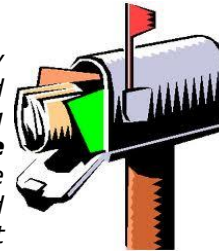
Trusting requires cognitive thinking skills in addition to emotional responses. There's critical thinking involved. Forty years ago, trustworthiness might have been measured by character, values, judgments and reputation - all built over time.



Today, we move faster, and often use more superficial measures of money and material possessions. A desire

Emotional Car Wrecks: How To Avoid the Road Hazards While Exploring Life

*Q: I met for drinks last week with one of my partner's safety net members, someone I'd only met briefly once before. We were having an interesting conversation, but **suddenly he got really upset** and began shouting at me angrily, saying: "I don't want to be around you!" **I was stunned and shaken**, so I left as quickly as I could. My partner has reassured me that everything will be fine, but I still don't know how I provoked such a reaction, and **I don't want this to leave me fearful of meeting new people. What should I do?***



A: That you are trying to understand what happened and reduce the likelihood of it happening again is great. You can use traumatic events as opportunities to reflect and learn. **Wouldn't it be nice if there was a driver's education course to help us get better at driving the emotional roads of life?** The biggest reason we typically get into car wrecks is that we don't notice the warning signs in time to take preventative action. One of the first lessons in driving school is to learn what to look for and how to respond to avoid the hazards. **Avoiding emotional crashes can be approached the same way.**

So what could you have been on the lookout for when you met for drinks? **You can think about emotional signals to watch for in three main categories: Changes in what you are feeling, hearing or seeing.**

Changes you can feel: One of the most useful signals we often fail to pay attention to is our own emotional state. If you can feel your "fight or flight" responses starting to fire, take them as a warning light - the conversation is getting emotional for at least yourself, and those emotions are likely to steer the conversation into some dangerous curves ahead. If you notice your heart starting to race or any other indicators of emotional stress, look for a way to slow down or take a break, perhaps by excusing yourself to go to the bathroom. Then you can take a deep breath and look more closely at what might be going on to trigger all that, and decide how you want to proceed.



for speed and connection makes it more difficult to determine who is trustworthy and who is not. Solid trust is still built over time.

Try taking these steps to avoid at least some of the painful experiences of discovering you've trusted the wrong person, or a good person but for the wrong thing.



Trust the right people for the right reasons and it changes your quality of life.

1. Strive to **make thoughtful, decisions** about who to trust and for what. Ask others, do a search engine search, take your time. Pay attention to information as well and intuition.
2. Enjoy someone who is nice. But remember: being **nice is not the same as being trustworthy**, nice only means nice / fun / social / available.
3. Think about **what trust means - to you**. Write this down and look at it frequently.
4. **Don't expect perfect.** Perfect doesn't exist. Honesty and integrity do. Keep your eyes open for the places where people are trustworthy - there are many.
5. **Look for patterns of behavior and attitudes** in good times and, even more importantly, during times of stress and conflict in a relationship. These are telling!
6. **Trust can also be established in some areas and withheld in others.** Trust your accountant with figures, your friend to choose good movies, yourself for groceries ...
7. **Stop yourself from jumping into trust too fast.** On average it takes 2 years in an active relationship for trust to be established. Slow down, enjoy, and trust over time.
8. **Don't get caught in thinking that the choice is between complete trust and no trust at all.** Neutral is a safer, healthier, better place to be until trust, or trust in specific



Changes you can hear: When you are in a conversation, you are hearing a lot more than just the words being said. Listen for changes in volume and tone of voice, speed of speech and the words chosen. You might notice changes in your own speaking, not just the other person's. If you notice changes, ask

yourself whether they could be signals of an emotional hazard ahead.

Changes you can see: Body language and eye contact are big signals of whether a conversation is on a smooth road or not. If someone's eye contact becomes much less frequent, they could be withdrawing for some reason. Suddenly sitting back or forward can be connected with emotional signals, too. If you see noticeable changes, turn up your alertness and decide whether you want to slow down or change directions. You can also look at your context - are other things going on that could be hazardous?



If you can remember the details about the conversation you described, can you remember whether there were any signals before the emotional car wreck? Was the "interesting conversation" you mentioned going into touchy topics? Getting faster? Did he change his body position or frequency of eye contact? You said you'd "met for drinks" - could alcohol have contributed to the wreck?

As you get into new conversations in the coming days, see **if you can turn on a higher level of alertness, watching for specific sensory details.** If you practice looking for potential hazards even in conversations where emotions are not likely to get intense, you'll be better prepared in the future, and be more confident that the same situation is less likely to happen again.



If you would like more ideas about how to prepare for and handle emotional conversations, so often a part of working with others in personal safety nets, the book **Crucial Conversations** (2002) has excellent advice and practical techniques for becoming better at avoiding emotional car wrecks.

Finally, **Build a good personal safety net:** A surprising correlation has been found: people with stronger social support networks, or safety nets, are able to slow heart rates and to return to a more calm state of mind faster than those without a support system, even though the support network was not contacted. Just the underlying "knowing" that there are



others to turn to gives more resiliencies when facing stress. Let others know who and where you're meeting. If you have mutual friends, check new acquaintances out with them. Have some people around you who have good skills in driving the emotional roads of life, and learn from them.

areas, is warranted.
 9. Be trustworthy yourself.
 10. While you're at it, appreciate the small and big ways in which trustworthiness shows up in your life. Build a "trust" account of people you can count on for specific things.

Rooting for your success!

You 'ought to be in pictures!

Everyone has a story to tell - so let's tell yours - and have it posted on our YouTube page!



You get to be the star of the show and (maybe) the photographer.

We're seeking **Personal Safety Net stories** - how you deal with a situation by building a network, or sharing with others to solve problems putting plans, people and resources together to make a task or journey easier.

Record your story using your **smart-phone**, or any other means that you have handy, and upload them to info@personalsafetynets.com.

WALLET CARDS

Our wallet cards are still the very best way to start to gather needed information and prepare yourself for any immediate emergency, and all challenges that may come your way. **The new and improved wallet card is available for FREE** to you, your relatives, friends and organizations. Simply send an addressed, stamped envelope and tell us how many of the new cards to send to you. (One first-class stamp will get you up to 5 cards.)

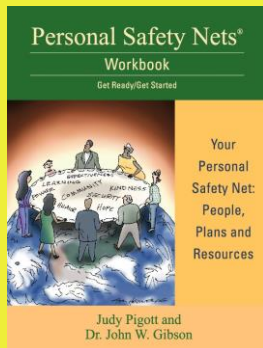


Invite us to come meet with your group - then you get not only wallet cards, but our book (FREE) on team building and personal safety nets as well!

Q & A provided by Dr. Mel Ganus,
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 For more on the topic, read "Who To Trust? For What? When?" on the left column.

HOT NEWS!!

We're making the entire Workbook: Get Ready/Get Started, by Judy Pigott and Dr. John W. Gibson, available for **FREE!**



Simply download the entire book by clicking on the Personal Safety Nets Workbook PDF on our home page or click here - and you'll have all the pages, table of contents and the entire appendix. You can then choose to save or print off the pages and have them all for yourself - FREE.



Tell your friends and family. Direct them to www.personalsafetynets.com. Now's the perfect time to get started on working on the forms and ideas you always wanted and needed to get down in writing.

Filling out this workbook will get you started on the road to a complete and very useful personal safety net.

UPCOMING SEMINARS AND PRESENTATIONS



Editor's Note: Some of these events are open to the general public. Please check directly with the organization before attending to see if they can accommodate you.



April will find us working with: **Washington Academy of Elder Lawyers**, speaking at the West Seattle Rotary luncheon, conducting a multi-day workshop for **Jubilee Women's Center**, a workshop for the entire staff at

Childhaven, working with **United Way executives from around the State of Washington**, holding a seminar at **East Shore Unitarian Church**, and working with the **BryanGH College of Health Sciences in Nebraska**

May will find us at **ANEW** (a non-profit organization linking women to apprenticeships and livable wage jobs in trades) for our quarterly seminar for their students, presenting PSN to the **Bellevue's Aging Services section of Parks & Community**, with a booth at the **Senior Services Breakfast**, conducting an *open-to-the public seminar* at **King County Library @ Lake Hills**, and conducting a seminar for the wonderful people at **Freedom Church in Seattle**.



Yes - there's still time in April and May - and in the months after. Now is the perfect time for to schedule a time for the staff of **Personal Safety Nets®** to come and work with your group or organization.

Personal Safety Nets® is moving towards its goal of putting 5,000 copies of our book into prepared hands to remind people of how teamwork can help! From now until June 2012, most seminars are FREE, and we include a free book for every participant.