



# Personal Safety Nets Newsletter

The Power of Kindness

September 2009, Issue 21

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Author/Playwright

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Author/Playwright  
Lee Tannen



In 2001, Lee Tannen (Bronx born and longtime friend of our Managing Director) wrote the memoir **I LOVED LUCY** about his relationship to Lucille Ball in the last decade of her life; the "lost Lucy years," spent mostly out of the spotlight and believe it or not, for Lucy, mostly around a backgammon table. The book was published by St. Martin's Press in hardcover and became an immediate best-seller, going into four printings, and was then published in paperback.

## Letters, We Get Letters

Dear Safety Nets Team,

**Q: Our reader, Darryl Swenson asks: "How do I avoid feelings of resentment as helping my friend out continues to take up so much of my time?"**

**A:** You ask a common question. Often the impulse to do something kind can lead us to doing much for someone else that we lose sight of our own needs and neglect to set limits. What started out as kindness can transform all too easily into resentment if we take on too much with too little support. **Focusing on three questions can help:**

- What is it you want to do?
- Why is it you want to do it?
- Where will you get the support to take on this task?

Look below for 5 tips to help avoid the resentment. We think you'll find the story (The Kindness of Laughter) and the tips (5 Tips to Using Kindness and Avoiding Resentment) both enjoyable and helpful.

## The Kindness of Laughter

**"Fame, if you win it  
Comes and goes in a minute...  
Where's the real stuff in life to cling  
to?"**

So go the lyrics from the wonderful song "Make Someone Happy" written by Betty Comden, Adolph Green and Jules Styne. **This was Lucille Ball's favorite song.**

Lucy, the first lady of comedy, the indomitable clown princess, the face seen by more people, more often than the face of any human being who ever lived! Lucy, who knew how to make everyone happy! **And yet at the end of her life, the person she found most difficult to make happy was herself!**

**I know, because I was with Lucy for much of the last ten years of her life.** And I know I came into her life and she came into mine with the sole purpose of making each other happy! With so many areas of her



In 2008 Lee adapted the memoir into a play--naturally enough, called **I LOVED LUCY**. It's had highly successful readings in New York and Los Angeles, and beginning in 2010 will be produced regionally throughout the country, (and hopefully, in Seattle too) with the plan to open in New York City just in time for the 100th Anniversary of Lucy's birth, August 6, 2011.

Because of the important issues and personal values this play raises, Personal Safety Nets® is a strong supporter of the efforts to produce **I LOVED LUCY**. **We thank Lee for guest-writing for this month's Newsletter, and for giving us a glimpse into the safety net of a beloved celebrity.**

Photo credits: Tom Wells

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A bunch of busy-bees have been hard at work, late at night, **making our web site more user friendly, easier to navigate, and filled with more information, stories and helpful hints.** If you haven't visited in a while, you'll want to head directly to our ToolKit section, which features **"Cool Free Downloads."** Here we post interesting articles, information and helpful hints to help you with every day challenges and make your life more interesting. **We are always adding new Cool Downloads, so check back regularly.**

life well supported, still **Lucy was missing an important part of her Personal Safety Net: she didn't have a friend to keep HER laughing.**

Let me back up a decade or so. I was distantly related to Lucy through her second husband Gary Morton. To be precise I was Gary Morton's sister's husband's first cousin's second son. You see, what I mean--distantly related. But when I met Lucy in 1980 at her home in Beverly Hills it was love at first sight and the distance between us melted away in minutes!

Although almost forty years separated us, we became the nearest and dearest of friends. **Soon we became like mother and son, without all the mother and son "baggage."** It was a unique love affair that would last a decade until her death in 1989 at the age of seventy-seven.

So why was Lucy unhappy in the last years of her life? **You'd think she'd have every reason in the world for happiness.** She had fame--she won that along with our hearts decades ago as the zany Lucy Ricardo. She had all the money she'd need for three lifetimes, and she had the respect of her children and the love of Gary who cared deeply and remained faithful until the end of her life.

Yes, an icon, yes, a legend, yes, a genius but like you and me Lucy was merely mortal. **At the end of her life Lucy was plagued with demons and delusions about her own self-worth that afflict most of us at some point in our lives.**

Lucy was a great believer and proselytizer of Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking" (Peale married Gary and Lucy) and yet in the last decade of her life she felt increasingly unable to put that power to work in her own life. After she stopped working, she began drowning in a sea of self-doubt and low self-esteem. **She needed a new hand to hold an important corner of her personal safety net to pull her safely to shore.**

And that's where I came in. **There was no way I was going to let her go under.** Not the lady who made the world laugh like it had never laughed before. So despite my own career, a partner, and two adorable shih tzus, I spent as much time with Lucy in the last ten years of her life as I could, doing what she liked to do best--playing games. She wasn't much for small talk, but she was big with games--scrambling five letter words, card games like Casino and Crazy Eights and when she discovered backgammon, **it was like she had found a new television series: Lucille Ball-Backgammon, with special houseguest star, Lee Tannen, me!**

We played and played and played all day every day and into the night until our hands couldn't roll the dice out anymore from the cup. And I made her tell me stories about movie stars she loved and movie stars she loathed, the Presidents she met, the loved ones left behind and the seventy-six movies she made before television was even invented!

**Yes, she found in me, I am proud to say, the person to hold that unsupported corner of her personal safety net--her lifeline that brought her back to life, for the last ten years of her life.** And I'd like to think, twenty years after her death, that with her personal safety net, she also found the one thing money and fame couldn't buy--happiness!

Don't miss out on:

**8,000 College Courses for FREE - Tips On Lifelong Learning:** How to take any of 8,000 college courses at the very best universities, with professors handpicked for their good teaching, at the time and place of your choice - FREE!

**Before Heading to College - For Parents & Students:** See the first in our series of articles: What support will your student need to have an adequate Personal Safety Net in place for when they are away at college and the unexpected turns up in her/his life?

**Learning the 5 Phases of Retirement:** It helps to understand the terminology because it provides retirees with a method to put their feelings and experiences into words, and also provides a set of landmarks to help them judge where they are and what lies ahead.

**Improve Your Mind, Mood & Outlook - 4 Easy Tips That Work!** Learn a few tips and you'll be able to sort out the bad from the good - and make yourself healthier while you save a bundle in the process.

**Seven Steps to Securing Help** Asking for help can also mean feeling embarrassed and vulnerable as we tell even selected others our personal information. This download gives you seven steps to follow when you find it's time to reach out for help...or want to prepare for that eventuality.

**Who Will Catch You When You Fall? Getting Your Personal Safety Net Ready** Take this short check-list test to gauge the strength, as well as your understanding of the organizational needs of a Personal Safety Net.

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## 5 Tips to Using Kindness and Avoiding Resentment



1. Do your best to do only 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 or conversations / 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 / must step back out. 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.

**Recognize that you have the ability to set limits or boundaries.** You're dealing with the life of another, so take a step back to allow for a more normal, less dependent life. Even in the most dire situations, you must care for yourself, and not become the sole source of help for long periods of time. **No one alone can hold up a safety net for another! It takes a Personal Safety Net team!**

## Safety Net Connections – Good Ideas, A Click Away



## Two Session Class: Pulling It All Together

**October 6 & 13, 2009**

**Time:** 6:30 - 8:30 PM (both nights)

**Location:** Our NEW office

Served by bus routes 54 - 55 + water taxi  
ADA Accessible / Plenty of free parking

Whether you're dealing with a child leaving home or heading to college, military deployment, operating a business, child birth, a medical emergency, a dysfunctional workplace, an upcoming wedding, retirement, a relocation, providing care for another, a job search, or hundreds of other challenges or changes, **this highly interactive two-session class will help you assess and find the tools, knowledge, and resources which will prepare and organize you for life's upcoming challenges and changes.**

Registration fee of \$75.00 includes both sessions, the book, Personal Safety Nets: Getting Ready for Life's Inevitable Changes and Challenges, the accompanying workbook, Get Ready/Get Started and your personal notebook. Light snacks will be provided.

**Space is limited - call to make your reservation now.**

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# Save 50%

**REWARD - Bring a neighbor, friend, relative or co-worker to our Multi-session class on October 6th & 13th. When you register by October 1, 2009, by phone (206-659-0665) simply give us the name of the person who is coming with you and when they register, we'll reduce your registration fee by 50%. Both parties must register by October 1 to be eligible for this offer.**

Offer Expires: October 1, 2009. Cancellation fees may apply. (Coupon has no cash value)