



Watching for Stumbling Blocks

There are two distinct human aspects to building and activating a successful PSN. There is the critical thinking aspect that deals with identifying, prioritizing and implementing needed functions and tasks - the anticipation and orchestration of the action plan towards achieving ideal outcomes. We bring our life experiences of knowledge, skills and abilities, our own and those of our team members, and other available resources, to bear on the event. The other equally important aspect of building and executing our PSN in time of need is the emotions of both the care partner and the care team's members.

Emotions are a significant aspect of any PSN. More often than not, emotions, managed or unmanaged, will impact the effectiveness of the team and they will dictate the quality of our outcomes. Emotions serve well when acknowledges and appropriately expressed and managed, or cause conflict and disruption if left unacknowledged or managed inappropriately. This section illuminates how adversity and loss may wound the spirit while conversely, and if handled well, may also build strength, character and resilience. Typically there are gains of wisdom when participating in a PSN, whether as a care partner or care team member.

Section Talking Points

- Emotions play a significant role in the effectiveness and efficiency of a team, and the wellbeing of care partner.
- The duration of need for a PSN team will have an impact; typically, the longer the need, the wider the range of emotions that will emerge
- Open and honest dialogue about heightened, strong or negative emotions, without judgmental overtones, will help the team and care partner to find solutions.
- PSN teams and care partners aren't perfect – compassion, gratitude, laughter, perspective, flexibility and adaptability are all likely attributes of a functional, productive and collaborative PSN team.

Getting Started: Watching for Stumbling Blocks and Pulling Your Team Together

Section Objectives

- Identifying stumbling blocks and emotional traps with learners for PSN team members.
- Identifying some of the stumbling blocks and emotional traps for PSN care partners.
- Recognizing the importance of open and honest communication and the need to prepare for the realities of emotions and the difficulty they can cause.
- Increasing insight into when professional help should be sought for heightened, lingering and difficult emotions, before they become problematic or beyond manageable, i.e. depression.
- Reminding participants to embrace the opportunity to help or be helped; it's the chance to enrich one's own life and the lives of others.
- Encouraging learning to read and reread [Chapter 7](#) [1] or to see the [Chapter 7 summary](#) [1] prior to and during a PSN event.
- Sharing and reviewing the [PSN Workbook, Chapter 7, pages 62- 64](#) [2], about having and being a PSN team member.

Skills to Focus On

- Supporting Others: A PSN team and the care partner support each other individually and collectively. A solid PSN provides food for the soul and makes each team member feel valued.



- Emotion Management/Control: Teamwork is about relationship and it takes managing emotions during heightened stress to guard against fracturing invaluable relationships.
- Accountability/Personal Responsibility: A PSN team is accountable and willing to be held responsible for contributing toward the desired outcomes of the care partner. Apologies, not blame, work best when balls are dropped. Solutions to problems, not complaints, work best when mistakes are made.
- Conflict Management: When conflicts can't be resolved, when there are differences in opinions or ways of doing something, don't give up. Discuss and agree on how to best manage the situation. Seek a compromise solution instead of being rigid and inflexible.
- Dealing with fear and anxiety: These are two very normal and natural emotions and not to be discounted or minimized. Sharing these feelings, [talking about them with trusted PSN members tends to diminish their intensity and power](#) [3].
- Handling adversity: Adversity is a part of life. Some refer to aspects of this as stress. Few, if any of us, can go through life free from adversity or stress. Overcoming adversity, building resilience is best achieved by knowing how to stop, calm down, pause, then reach out to safe others: family and friends, our support system or our PSN network. Seldom does isolation allow us to move beyond the adversity or to learn and grow from it.
- Leadership: A PSN team called into action needs a leader to prioritize, organize, make decisions, and if needed problem solve, monitor and track progress, help navigate and keep team and care partner in the loop.

Mistakes to Avoid

- Neglecting to remind learners of the Website links they can find as they explore this website, for additional information, and for the prepared samples available to all team members. These can be found under the [Resources](#) [4] section.
- Undervaluing the importance of this section.
- Allowing unmanaged or uncontrolled emotions to ruin good relationships.
- Failing to remind participants that when in doubt about someone's emotional or mental wellbeing, professional help should be sought.
- Forgetting to mention the samples on the last pages of the Workbook ([pages 70 and 71](#) [5], and [page 79](#) [6]).

Exercise 1:

To Give the class members one idea of a tool or technique to use in difficult conversations.

1. Divide the class into 2 to 4 groups (depending on size. Each group should have around 5 or 6 people in it. Two actively participate, the rest are observers and take notes. Paper and pens will be needed.
2. Ask for a volunteer to participate in a role play around a difficult conversation they have had, or might be preparing to have. Explain that they can change names, genders, anything that will keep the actual situation private. (Have 2 copies of a prepared sample from your own past to offer, if needed)
3. Have that volunteer choose someone else in the group to represent the other party to the conversation.
4. Either give each volunteer copies of your scenario, or have the 1st one brief the other on the conversation to come.
5. Have both volunteers and observers write 2 headings on a piece of paper. One says, "Here's what I like/appreciate about what you are doing." The other says, "Here's what would be of more help to us in this situation."
6. Instruct the volunteers to spend just a minute thinking about what he or she would like to say to the partner, and write a few notes under both headings.
7. Have the volunteers role play their conversation in about 3 minutes. Then stop.
8. Now, going to each group, draw the partner aside and privately give him/her some potential



responses, if these are needed: such as "I like that you are taking the time to talk with me." "I wish that you would explain a few things more thoroughly." "I like that you have things well organized for all of us to be able to help you." "It would help me more if you could take more time to let us ask questions."

9. Now give time for the conversation role play to take place again.
10. After the exercise, solicit feedback from the observers about what they might have learned.
11. Depending on how much time you have, you can have the volunteers speak too.
12. Speak briefly to the group about the importance of thanking the other party for any feedback and information. Have each of the volunteers thank each other and the observers for being willing to share the important feedback.

Exercise 2:

To demonstrate a teambuilding game that is fun and helps pull a team together.

- Divide the group into teams of 4 or 5.
- Have each person write their name, with four pieces of information about themselves on a piece of paper. Three of the things should be true, and one should be false. Such as, "Nancy likes gardening, has 2 children, used to competitively ice skate, and owns a horse."
- Have the small group go around to each participant and try to determine which is true and which is false.
- Debrief with each person identifying the falsehood and getting information on who, if anyone, believed incorrectly & why.

Exercise 3:

To explore how and why we try to take power over others.

- Have enough scarves or bandanas (or pieces of paper) for everyone.
- Have each person extend both hands in front of themselves.
- Have everyone start with a scarf draped over one of their outstretched hands.
- Make sure when you are explaining the rules to be specific about what you say. The rules are as follows:
 - You can only move if you have a scarf on your arm. You can take other people's scarves and are allowed to have as many scarves as you want. If you don't have a scarf you can pivot and grab other people's scarves, but can't walk. You can't hold your scarves to your body.
 - The taking of scarves will go on for about 5 minutes. Use a timer.
 - Discuss any of several themes around this activity; how people felt, why they did what they did.
 - Follow up with a discussion around why people started grabbing scarves even though if no one would have grabbed anyone else's scarves, everyone would have been able to move around freely.
 - Tie this into a discussion about allowing everyone to participate, and being sure no one person is taking control of the group.

[Continue reading ?](#) [7]

[CONTACT US](#)

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



Source URL: <https://personalsafetynets.com/content/instructor-guide-watching-stumbling-blocks>

Links

- [1] <https://personalsafetynets.com/node/326>
- [2] https://personalsafetynets.com/default/files/workbook_chapter_7.pdf
- [3] <https://personalsafetynets.com/node/408>
- [4] <https://personalsafetynets.com/node/316>
- [5] https://personalsafetynets.com/sites/default/files/workbook_chapter_7.pdf
- [6] https://personalsafetynets.com/sites/default/files/workbook_chapter_8.pdf
- [7] <https://personalsafetynets.com/content/instructor-guide-watching-stumbling-blocks>