



## Intellect

**Intellect:** Keeping your brain in as high functioning a place as possible doesn't happen without thought. Throughout life, from babyhood onwards, we can be learning new things. Are you curious about something? **Your characteristic or quality.** Can you join others to play scrabble or games that keep you thinking? **Friends & family.** Are there classes to be taken? **Career or Retirement.** Actively attending to your intellect can perk your spirits and send positive ripples to other aspects of your well-supported life.

*Here's some activities that relate to using and increasing your intellect:*

- Help keep this part of your Personal Safety Net organized by gathering and placing these in a place where you, and those you want to have the information, will be able to access it:
  - Passwords
  - Emergency contacts 1 and 2
  - Emergency information and plans
  - Keep a list or file of degrees, certificates, letters of recommendation
- List 3 questions you have about things that have piqued your curiosity.
- Choose one of those to pursue, and give yourself a way to do this.
- Try out a new recipe, route, or skill.
- Click here to see our complete organizational checklist to help you get (and stay) organized

## Resources:

## Cautions and Concerns About "Friendship"

Don't think that everyone you meet will be good friendship material. In most people's experience, they have to causally meet between fifty and a hundred new people to find one who, three years later, will have become a good friend.



[1]Now, this isn't negative. Think of whom you meet. You join a new yoga class and interact with 5-35 people a week – but do you actually get to know them? You chat with the tellers at the bank or cashiers at the grocery. You say hello to the librarian and have casual conversations with friends of friends at a party. The numbers add up. Treat them lightly, but courteously. You may be encountering your newest and best ever friend.

Here, now, are some cautions about new friendships:

1. You can change or reform yourself if you like, but it is not your job to change anyone else. Don't try to change

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someone else to make them be a better “fit” – and don’t waste time being someone you are not just because someone else wants to change you. Be authentic and show up fully. See who else does too.

2. Be kind and thoughtful, but stay true to yourself. A good friend sometimes does things she’d prefer not to – a concert with a band that’s not a favorite, helping move when it’s inconvenient – but does not give into pressure to do something she thinks is wrong or hurtful. Setting your own boundaries leaves room for generosity to both yourself and others.

3. If staying true to convictions or beliefs causes someone to move away from you, know this is OK. Having integrity will help you find friends who love you for who you are.

4. Remember the saying I first heard in Camp Fire when I was a little girl: “make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver, and the other gold.” Unless you’ve discovered that those you’ve thought of as friends actually are hurtful to you, don’t leave one set to gain access to another.

5. Making friends with money is a poor avenue to good friendships. Exchanges must be fair and have equal value from each side to be sustainable. A listening ear may balance with a dinner. A loaned item may equate with a ticket to an event. Talk about how the exchange feels – looking at more than money.

6. Remember that your intuition and experience with someone are good places to start when choosing a friend. If it feels wrong, intrusive, scary – or if you’ve experience with being uncomfortable around someone, take this seriously. Start slowly and pay attention. **YOU ARE WORTH IT!**

## 10 Things We Can Do to Encourage Nonviolent Communications



Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a way of interacting that facilitates the flow of communication needed to exchange information and resolve differences peacefully. It focuses on sharing human values and needs, and encourages the use of language that increases good will - and avoidance of language that contributes to resentment or lowered self-esteem.

## 6 Steps for Keeping Balanced While Helping Others



When you’re helping someone else - friend, child, family member, care partner, whomever, it’s easy to get wrapped

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up in the tasks you and they have agreed upon. Helping others often necessitates paperwork, follow-up and follow-through - work that puts your own needs on the back burner. So we're here to remind you of 6 important and easy steps that will keep your own life balanced and healthy.

## Am I prepared? (Pdf)



In our book, Personal Safety Nets, we present stories of how life happens to people from ages 8 to 80+. Experiencing unexpected and unwanted challenges and changes happens to all of us. Are you prepared?

## Building A Team With Effective Communication

Your goal is to build a dependable team by communicating clearly and effectively.



*[2]Good communicators:*

- Are aware of their conversational style and habits
- Know what styles and habits in other people are difficult for them
- Are flexible in their communicating
- Sincerely desire to create shared meaning with others
- Interpret gently

### *Barriers to good communication:*

- Assuming that one's style is the right style
- Interpreting other people's meanings as you would your own

People start off with different assumptions about the world and about relationships. This can lead to differing communication styles.



[3]Communication styles

Type A (sometimes labeled as female):

- See themselves as individuals in a network of connections
- Prefer to be connected
- Might say, "We're close and have much in common"
- Often define role as to help one another

Type B (sometimes labeled as male):

- See themselves as individuals in hierarchical structure of individuals
- Prefer to know who has more or less power
- Often see others as potential threats
- See people as "separate and dif- ferent"
- Often see their role as protecting someone or something

## Exercising Your Asking Muscles



Your goal is to build a dependable support network by communicating clearly and effectively. A kind of knowledge that goes into "strength" is knowing when and how to ask for help . . . and being able to just do it. *Ask!*

### Good (Effective) Communicators:

- Are aware of their conversational style and habits.
- Know what styles and habits in other people are difficult for them.
- Are flexible in their communicating.
- Sincerely desire to create shared meaning with others.
- Interpret gently.



Begin improving your control by gaining strength through asking - try the easy exercises on this form.

[Download a Form to Help Exercise Your Asking Muscles](#) [4]

## Food Packaging Traps - 5 Nutrition-Savvy Tips

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from "Don't Fall for These Diet Traps" By David Zinczenko with Matt Goulding (authors of Eat This, Not That! Supermarket Survival Guide) published in Women's Health Magazine (July 2009)*

Grocery shopping is something we take for granted – you do it for yourself, your family, or possibly as part of a Safety Net for another. And when you walk into the store, emblazoned on nearly every box, bag, and bottle on every shelf is a multitude of nutritional claims, essentially screaming, "Buy me! Buy me!" But by learning a few tips you'll be able to sort out the bad from the good—and save yourself a bundle in the process. **First thing you'll need to know: claims are marketing ploys, pure and simple.** For instance, you might notice a label on a package of cookies that proclaims "fat-free!" But what you don't see (unless you examine the tiny print on the Nutrition Facts panel) is that those cookies are loaded with sugar and additives. So here are some rules to follow to make you a truly savvy shopper.

**1. Numbers can be deceiving:** On the front of a box of reduced-fat Keebler Club Crackers—in big yellow letters, no less—you'll find the following claim: "33% Less Fat Than Original Club Crackers." The math is accurate: The original product does contain three grams of fat per serving, while the reduced-fat version has two grams. It is a 33 percent difference—but we're only talking about one gram of fat here! And what you won't see advertised on the box is that this version has 33 percent more carbs. To add flavor, they replace that one gram of fat with three grams of refined flour and sugar—hardly a healthy trade-off.

**Tip:** Buy whole-wheat crackers that pack at least three grams of filling fiber per serving. They'll leave you less likely to start noshing later.

**2. "Healthy" logos are bought, not just earned:** Many instant oatmeals wear the American Heart Association seal like a badge of honor, yet they have more sugar than a serving of Fruit Loops. If you read the fine print below the logo, you'll see that it simply meets the AHA's "food criteria for saturated fat and cholesterol." In other words, it could contain a pound of sugar and still qualify. How is this? Companies pay for a product to bear the AHA sign. This explains why the AHA check mark might appear on one product but not on another, even when both meet the guidelines.

**Tip:** Choose unsweetened oatmeal and other cereals to prevent a sugar high (and a calorie binge), and then sweeten them yourself with just a touch of honey, almond milk, or cinnamon.

**3. "Good source" claims are questionable:** Don't be fooled by labels touting foods as "good" sources of vitamins and minerals: A serving needs just 10 percent of the recommended daily value of a specific nutrient to be considered a "good source." Take Nabisco Honey Teddy Grahams, a "Good Source of Calcium." You'd have to eat 10 servings—that's the entire box and then some—to get the amount you need for the day. If you're plowing through boxes of cookies to get your daily requirement, a lack of calcium is going to be the least of your health problems.

**Tip:** To get any of your nutrients, stick with nature's multivitamins: fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and lean meats. Whereas with fortified cookies your calcium comes with only sugar, when you eat the bone-builder in low-fat milk and cheese you also get a healthy dose of fat-burning, muscle-making protein.

**4. Health benefits may be exaggerated:** If you drink bottled green tea, you probably think it's teeming with antioxidants. But some brands are not packed with free-radical killers as manufacturers would like you to believe. An independent food laboratory analyzed 14 different bottled green teas for their levels of catechins, the antioxidants in tea that are thought to fight disease. The finding: Catechin content varied widely among brands.



Honest Tea Organic Honey Green Tea topped the charts with an impressive 215 milligrams, but some products barely registered on the antioxidant scale. Ito En Tea's Tea Lemongrass Green had just 28 milligrams, and Republic of Tea Pomegranate Green Tea had a meager nine.

**Tip:** You know you're safe with Honest Tea, but you can also boost your catechin levels by brewing your own and letting it steep for at least five minutes.

### 5. "Lean" meats are usually full of sodium

When you remove fat, you lose juiciness. To prevent virtuous cuts of meat from tasting like shoe leather, some manufacturers enhance their poultry, pork, and beef products with a solution of water, salt, and nutrients that impart flavor. This practice can dramatically boost the meat's sodium level. For example, a four-ounce serving of regular turkey tenderloin contains a mere 55 milligrams of sodium, while the same amount of a low-fat enhanced version packs 840 milligrams. You're swapping one evil (fat) for another—belly-bloating and blood-pressure-hiking sodium.

**Tip:** Stick with regular turkey and other naturally lean meats; just watch portion size. All you need is one or two paper-thin slices to satisfy your taste buds. And if it says "enhanced," walk on by.

## For Some, Laughter Is the Best Medicine



[5]Feeling rundown? Try laughing more. Some researchers think laughter just might be the best medicine, helping you feel better and putting that spring back in your step.

"I believe that if people can get more laughter in their lives, they are a lot better off," says Steve Wilson, MA, CSP, a psychologist and laugh therapist. "They might be healthier too."

Yet researchers aren't sure if it's actually the act of laughing that makes people feel better. A good sense of humor, a positive attitude, and the support of friends and family might play a role, too.

"The definitive research into the potential health benefits of laughter just hasn't been done yet," says Robert R. Provine, professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and author of *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*.

*But while we don't know for sure that laughter helps people feel better, it certainly isn't hurting.*





Laughter  
is an  
instant  
vacation.  
- Milton Berle

### [6]Laughter Therapy: What Happens When We Laugh?

We change physiologically when we laugh. We stretch muscles throughout our face and body, our pulse and blood pressure go up, and we breathe faster, sending more oxygen to our tissues.

People who believe in the benefits of laughter say it can be like a mild workout -- and may offer some of the same advantages as a workout.

"The effects of laughter and exercise are very similar," says Wilson. "Combining laughter and movement, like waving your arms, is a great way to boost your heart rate."

One pioneer in laughter research, William Fry, claimed it took ten minutes on a rowing machine for his heart rate to reach the level it would after just one minute of hearty laughter.

And laughter appears to burn calories, too. Maciej Buchowski, a researcher from Vanderbilt University, conducted a small study in which he measured the amount of calories expended in laughing. It turned out that 10-15 minutes of laughter burned 50 calories.

While the results are intriguing, don't be too hasty in ditching that treadmill. One piece of chocolate has about 50 calories; at the rate of 50 calories per hour, losing one pound would require about 12 hours of concentrated laughter!



### [7]Laughter's Effects on the Body

In the last few decades, researchers have studied laughter's effects on the body and turned up some potentially interesting information on how it affects us:

- Blood flow. Researchers at the University of Maryland studied the effects on blood vessels when people were shown either comedies or dramas. After the screening, the blood vessels of the group who watched



the comedy behaved normally -- expanding and contracting easily. But the blood vessels in people who watched the drama tended to tense up, restricting blood flow.

- Immune response. Increased stress is associated with decreased immune system response, says Provine. Some studies have shown that the ability to use humor may raise the level of infection-fighting antibodies in the body and boost the levels of immune cells, as well.
- Blood sugar levels. One study of 19 people with diabetes looked at the effects of laughter on blood sugar levels. After eating, the group attended a tedious lecture. On the next day, the group ate the same meal and then watched a comedy. After the comedy, the group had lower blood sugar levels than they did after the lecture.
- Relaxation and sleep. The focus on the benefits of laughter really began with Norman Cousins's memoir, *Anatomy of an Illness*. Cousins, who was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a painful spine condition, found that a diet of comedies, like Marx Brothers films and episodes of Candid Camera, helped him feel better. He said that ten minutes of laughter allowed him two hours of pain-free sleep.



### [8]The Evidence: Is Laughter the Best Medicine?

But things get murky when researchers try to sort out the full effects of laughter on our minds and bodies. Is laughter really good for you? Can it actually boost your energy? Not everyone is convinced.

"I don't mean to sound like a curmudgeon," says Provine, "but the evidence that laughter has health benefits is iffy at best."

He says that most studies of laughter have been small and not well conducted. He also says too many researchers have an obvious bias: they go into the study wanting to prove that laughter has benefits.

For instance, Provine says studies of laughing have often not looked at the effects of other, similar activities. "It's not really clear that the effects of laughing are distinct from screaming," Provine says.

Provine says that the most convincing health benefit he's seen from laughter is its ability to dull pain. Numerous studies of people in pain or discomfort have found that when they laugh they report that their pain doesn't bother them as much.

But Provine believes it's not clear that comedy is necessarily better than another distraction. "It could be that a compelling drama would have the same effect."

One of the biggest problems with laughter research is that it's very difficult to determine cause and effect.

For instance, a study might show that people who laugh more are less likely to be sick. But that might be because people who are healthy have more to laugh about. Or researchers might find that, among a group of people with the same disease, people who laugh more have more energy. But that could be because the people who laugh more have a personality that allows them to cope better.





So it becomes very hard to say if laughter is actually an agent of change, or just a sign of a person's underlying condition.



**[9]Laughing It Up for Quality of Life**

Laughter, Provine believes, is part of a larger picture. "Laughter is social, so any health benefits might really come from being close with friends and family, and not the laughter itself."

In his own research, Provine has found that we're thirty times more likely to laugh when we're with other people than when we're alone. People who laugh a lot may just have a strong connection to the people around them. That in itself might have health benefits.

Wilson agrees there are limits to what we know about laughter's benefits.

"Laughing more could make you healthier, but we don't know," he tells WebMD. "I certainly wouldn't want people to start laughing more just to avoid dying -- because sooner or later, they'll be disappointed."

But we all know that laughing, being with friends and family, and being happy can make us feel better and give us a boost -- even though studies may not show why.

So Wilson and Provine agree that regardless of whether laughter actually improves your health or boosts your energy, it undeniably improves your quality of life.

"Obviously, I'm not anti-laughter," says Provine. "I'm just saying that if we enjoy laughing, isn't that reason enough to laugh? Do you really need a prescription?"

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from "Give Your Body a Boost -- With Laughter. Why, for some, laughter is the best medicine. By R. Morgan Griffin (April 2009), WebMD. Reviewed by Michael W. Smith, MD*

## **Good Jokes Can Cure Bad Moods**

***Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from "Good Jokes Cure Bad Moods" by Kathleen Doheny, WebMD Health News (August 2009), Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD***

After a rough day at the office or a nasty interchange, a great joke can often quickly lift us out of a bad mood. But why? Dutch researchers think they've verified why this is so and how a joke helps us -- most of the time - laugh it off and turn our negative mood positive.

It's not as obvious as you might think, says Madelijn Strick, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher at Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands, and the lead author of the study, published in the journal *Emotion*.



"Indeed, there is ample evidence that positive emotions in general can counteract negative emotions," she says. "However, this explanation does not make humor 'special.' It does not explain why humor would be more effective in this respect than non-humorous positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and love."

So Strick's team set out to figure out exactly how a joke can lift bad moods.

Not to spoil the punch line, but the researchers found a joke works not just because the humor distracts us from negative emotions but because of the cognitive work we need to do to "get" the joke.

### **Humor and Mood: Study Details**

Strick's team had this hypothesis: Humorous stimuli (such as jokes or cartoons) would relieve negative emotions more than equally positive, but not funny, stimuli. So they asked 90 students, average age 21.5, to participate. The "cover story" was that the experiment was about how emotional experiences affect one's perception of color.

The researchers showed the men and women neutral, mildly negative, and strongly negative pictures during the study, followed by either a humorous or a positive, non-humorous stimulus. The negative pictures depicted such scenes as assault, car crashes, and drug addicts, and the positive ones had, for instance, a young father holding his newborn. Neutral pictures showed traffic scenes, neutral faces, or geometric shapes.

After viewing the pictures, the participants were asked to report their feelings. They were asked about how much they liked specific colors, too.

### **Humor and Mood: Study Results**

When the men and women saw mildly and strongly negative pictures, then got the humorous stimuli, they had less negative feelings than when they were exposed to the negative pictures and then the non-funny positive stimuli. The stimuli that posed greater cognitive demands -- that is, people had to work harder to get the joke -- were more effective at lifting bad moods than those that were less demanding. When they saw neutral pictures, humor had the same mood-lifting effect as non-humor.

Strick says that suggests, "humor may attenuate negative emotions as a result of cognitive distraction." **What sets humor, or at least a joke, apart from other positive emotions, she says, is that it includes an "incongruity" that must be resolved to get the joke. That is, the typical joke "set up" motivates listeners to make a prediction about the outcome, but a good punch line violates the expectations. The listener has to resolve the incongruity to make sense of the punch line.**

The new research verifies what humor experts have known or suspected, says Clifford Kuhn, MD, a professor of psychiatry at the University Of Louisville School Of Medicine in Kentucky who gives presentations on the value of humor. *"They have verified in numbers the fact that a joke is superior to any other forms of distraction it was tested against."* He explains the work of "getting" a joke -- resolving the incongruity -- by telling an old joke:

*A frantic father calls the doctor, saying, "Doctor, my child just swallowed a fountain pen." The doctor assures him he is on the way and asks, "What are you doing in the meantime?" The father replies: "Using a pencil."*

That punch line, of course, is unexpected. "The cognitive work of finding the new 'congruent' is what we call 'getting the joke,'" he says. Listeners must figure out that the father, frantic, misunderstood the question.

"What they are suggesting is that humor ... is an effective way to redirect anxiety," says Ed Dunkelblau, PhD, a psychologist in Northbrook, Ill., and past president of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor. Using jokes to boost moods works better if the situation that put you in the bad mood is not extremely personal, Kuhn says. **If someone's loved one was just diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, for instance, making a joke that they should just "forget about it" would not go over well -- the situation is too personal,** he says.

Your mood can't be so bad that the funniest joke in the world couldn't lift your spirits, he says. "You have to be in the mood to play," Kuhn says. "You have to be willing to participate in the joke to get the benefit out of it."



## Improve Your Mind, Mood & Outlook – 4 Easy Tips That Work!



[10] Sometimes getting yourself or another out of a rut can be as simple as changing how you think or doing something new. Next time you're feeling in the dumps, or asked to care for another, think of these tips as easy and fun ways you can change direction and put a smile on an important face. So let's get started:

### 1. Switch hands (yes, that's what we said!)

Use your non-dominant hand to do daily tasks like brushing your teeth or clicking the computer mouse. This simple change promotes the growth of neurons in the brain, which can sharpen memory and thinking. "It'll give your brain the regular workout it needs to stay healthy," says life coach and Health columnist M. J. Ryan, author of *AdaptAbility: How to Survive Change You Didn't Ask For*.

### 2. Engage your senses

Get dressed with your eyes closed! If you need to, lean on something, and if you're a care-giver to someone else, provide a little support. A second trick is to try communicating only nonverbally (that's right, no words) – at one meal – it's better than charades, and really does work. By relying on different senses, you create more neurons in your brain and get more creative – and who doesn't need more creativity – at any age?

### 3. Try something fresh

It doesn't have to be anything big—a free class at a dance center, a new recipe. As you realize you can do this, your mind and attitude will lead you to even greater accomplishments. When you learn a new skill, your brain actually builds new circuitry. "Think of it as mental cross-training," Ryan says.

### 4. Ask: What's right about this?

"How you frame something can change everything," Ryan says. Try to consider the sunny side of a situation rather than focusing on what's wrong with it. So if it's pouring rain, instead of stressing about getting drenched, think of the good it will do for your garden – try saying it out loud to yourself. The result: A more optimistic and inventive you who can take on just about anything.

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from "Simple Changes to Improve Your Mind, Mood, and Outlook" by Brittani Renaud, published in Health Magazine*

## Learning How to Ask for Help – Being Direct

*Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Diane E. Scott, RN, MSN, "Learning to Ask for Help." Center for American Nurses, November, 2007.*

Dr. Susan Gaddis, author for the Center for American Nurses, *Nursing that Works* series, wrote the article, "How to ask for help and increase your chances at getting it." Focusing upon the work environment and collaboration, she details some of the benefits of asking for help, while we added our own focus upon the actual task of asking.

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## 1) The Benefits of Asking for Help:

**Saving time and money.** When you ask for help, you create a synergy that leads to the reduction in the amount of time needed to complete any task. When you ask for help and guidance, you can often avoid costly mistakes saving you and your healthcare organization time and money.

**Avoiding being viewed as a martyr.** Being perceived as the person who never enlists the assistance of others may have a negative impact on how you are viewed, as most co-workers value collaboration and teamwork.

**Developing others.** By asking for help, you empower and mentor future leaders and help to develop their strengths. In addition, you make them feel valued for their talents, knowledge and abilities.

## 2) Learning to Ask for Help:

Sometimes we meet resistance when we request assistance from others, but perhaps it's not the request it is the *manner in which it is requested*. If you initiate a request for help by using a passive statement, it may result in immediate negative feelings toward the request.

For example:

- If you start your request by stating: "I really hate to ask you ..." What they may be thinking is: "I really hate it too!"
- If you start your request by stating: "If it's not too much trouble ..." What they may be thinking is: "Of course it's trouble!"
- If you start your request by stating: "Nobody signed up for this ..." What they may be thinking is: "I didn't either!"

By learning how to ask for assistance without beginning your statement in a passive or negative tone, you will have better results in gaining the other person's engagement.

When you're asking for help remember to be **direct – and organize**

**KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING FOR AND WHO YOU'RE GOING TO ASK.**

**Consider stating your request by asking:**

“Would you . . . “

“Would you please . . . “

There's plenty of help to be found in our Workbook: **Personal Safety Nets® Get Ready/Get Started, [Chapter Three: Asking and Organizing](#) [11].**

**Here's a few more phrases to use for Asking for Help:**

- How do you think you could help me with ...
- What aspect of this would you like to handle?
- What part of this would you like to take on?
- What ideas do you have with regard to...?
- What contribution would you like to make?
- What do you have in mind with regard to helping me?
- Based on your experience, how does this all fit together and what part of this would you like to take on?
- What are some of the ways you'd like to help?

## Resources:



## Links We Need & Links We Weave



[12]An AARP Public Policy Institute report documented that **42.1 million family caregivers in the U.S. provide daily care to an adult with limitations**, and 61.6 million family members provide care at some time during the year. **If these people were paid it would cost the economy (taxpayers) \$450 billion dollars a year!** Seen very simply, millions and millions of adults with limitations are totally dependent on family members for most of their help and services.

**Because of a lack of means and ability, many families in need first reach out or are referred to a variety of available social services.** Most find themselves connecting with a social worker. Of course, we know social workers (not clinical social workers) help people deal with challenges and a wide range of situations and with many diverse populations, including children, people with disabilities, and people with addictions.



[13]While there are currently 650,500 social workers in the US, and employment of social workers is growing at a current rate of 25 percent every 9 years, faster than the average for all other occupations, we have (another) problem that could put millions more in trouble. Maybe statistics cloud the dilemma, so let's be clear: **the 650,500 social workers in the U.S. do not serve the 42.1 million family caregivers in the U.S. who provide daily care to an adult with limitations.**

Currently, the number of social workers (which costs each taxpayer over \$7,800 per person - and will rise 70 percent in 2018 to \$13,100 per person) will not keep up with both the current clientele and the ever increasing demands of new claimants. Be assured, government support will not increase proportionately.

Now, with millions of families seeking any kind of help and millions more relying upon a less than adequate supply of social workers to meet their needs, is the right time to ask: **How do we provide individuals and families with a healthier network of interdependence - reducing dependency, increasing outcomes, decreasing cost, and encouraging interdependence among family and friends?**



[14]Our answer must be to grow more independent through interdependence - to every human has the need to help and be helped, to ask and to respond, to build and to nurture. *And for you - that time is - now!*

- **We need to network** - to see what we have in place and what we can build for the future. Put a sheet of paper in front of you and start building or putting your personal community/network in place. **Let's make a list of friends and family, and next to each, list a specialty they are known for, some thing they like to do, or just simply list them as a general helper.** From such a list come those who are or can be available to talk, advise, help and/or take action on your behalf.
- **Next, let's take the conversation "on the road." Set aside time to communicate (email, letter, in person)** - it will serve you well to start the conversation now and not just when you're in a crisis. **Let all of your community know that you appreciate them as friends/family and hope to be able to call on them when you need someone to talk to, advise or help you, or take action when you're in need - and you would like to do the same for them - be part of their personal safety net!** Check to see that they want to be part of your network/community - an don't be scared off - **research tells us most people respond positively to being asked for help.**

We're not kidding ourselves or you - these are two huge steps and climbing big steps doesn't come easy - but **these are steps worth taking before you find yourself entangled in the dependency, cost and outcome of our ever stress and fractured social system.**

## The Happiness Initiative

While economists the world over argue the key to happiness is obtaining and enjoying material development, the small country of **Bhutan (known as the Land of the Thunder Dragon)** argues that **amassing material growth does not necessarily lead to happiness.** Upon Bhutan's admission to the United Nations in 1971, their Druk Gyalpo (King) announced "our country's policy is to consolidate our sovereignty to achieve economic self-reliance, prosperity and happiness for our country and people."





[15]While the emphasis is placed on both prosperity and happiness, the latter is considered of more significance. The reigning fourth Druk Gyalpo emphasized less than 10 years ago that for Bhutan "Gross National Happiness," is more important than "Gross National Product."

In Bhutan, the four main pillars of Gross National Happiness are: 1. Equitable and equal socio-economic development, 2. Preservation and promotion of cultural and spiritual heritage, 3. Conservation of environment and, 4. Good governance which is interwoven, complementary, and consistent.

While conventional development models stress economic growth as the ultimate objective, the concept of Gross National Happiness is based on the premise that **true development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each other.**



[16]Now, in case you're thinking this is a "nice" concept that probably works on a commune somewhere in northern California, Bhutan is a county with 634,982 inhabitants and a land area of 38,394 square kilometers - quite a bit bigger than a hippie enclave! Further, **the concept of "Gross National Happiness" has greatly enabled Bhutan to create a government dedicated to facilitating community, to reducing the gap between the rich and the poor, and to ensuring good governance and empowerment of her people.**

Can such a concept work here in the United States where most people think of money as defining happiness, and this to be directly linked to increased income?

For "[The Happiness Initiative](#) [17]," emotions are just one part of happiness. **The Happiness Initiative defines happiness as "satisfaction with life," meaning whether you are living the best life for you, and feel your life is worthwhile.** They look at the conditions in which we live and satisfaction with our lives. According to Musikanski, "By including the conditions of happiness in a definition of happiness, one acknowledges the internal and external are integrated."

**Working with a team of researchers led by Dr. Ryan Howell at [San Francisco State University's Personality and Wellbeing Lab.](#) [18]the Happiness Initiative developed a survey.** It is a set of scientifically validated questions most likely to accurately predict conditions of wellbeing. Dr. Howell kept the nine domains measured by Bhutan and added a tenth, workplace experience, identified as an essential condition of wellbeing by Gallup and others.



**[19]When you look at your own happiness, you need to see if you have balance or imbalance in your life that fosters or undermines your affect and satisfaction with life.** The conditions of happiness the Happiness Initiative uses to define happiness (along with affect and satisfaction with life!) are:

- **Material Well-being** - Evaluates individual and family income, financial security, the level of debt, employment security, and the quality of housing.
- **Physical Health** - Measures the effectiveness of health policies, with criteria such as self-rated health, disability, patterns of risk behavior, exercise, sleep, nutrition, etc.
- **Time Balance** - Looks at the use of time as one of the most significant factors in quality of life, especially time for recreation and socializing with family and friends. A balanced management of time is evaluated, including time spent in traffic jams, at work and in educational activities.
- **Psychological Well-being** - Assesses the degree of satisfaction and optimism in individual life. The indicators analyze self-esteem, sense of competence, stress, spiritual activities and prevalence of positive and negative emotions.
- **Education and Learning** - Considers factors such as participation in formal and informal education, development of skills and capabilities, involvement in children's education, values education and environmental education.
- **Cultural Vitality** - Evaluates local traditions, festival, core values, participation in cultural events, opportunities to develop artistic skills and discrimination due to religion, race or gender.
- **Environmental Quality** - Measures the perception of citizens about the quality of their water, air, soil, forest cover, biodiversity, etc. The indicators include access to green areas and system of waste management and transportation.
- **Governance** - Assesses how the population views the government, the media, the judiciary, the electoral system, and the police, in terms of responsibility, honesty and transparency. It also measures involvement of citizens in community decisions and political processes.
- **Community Vitality** - Focuses on relationships and interactions. It examines the level of confidence, the sense of belonging, the vitality of affectionate relationships, safety at home and in the community, and the practice of giving and volunteering.
- **Workplace Experience** - Evaluates employment satisfaction, work-life balance, job conditions, productivity and compensation.

Empowered by this data, anyone anywhere can revitalize and reframe the debate and provoke richer, broader conversation on a local and national level about what really should guide policy makers in governing our country.

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