

Personal Safety Nets® Guide to 5 Steps to Make "Asking" Easier and More Natural



From a very young age we're taught to ask politely for what we want, and to say 'thank you' once help is given. **As we get older, though, asking for help is often confused with or feared to be a personal weakness or vulnerability.** Your messages said you share these worries. We want to help.

Research done by Dr. Deborah Serani **lists a number of myths, all of which have been proven false.**

Myth: Asking for help makes us look vulnerable.

- No, reaching out well out is actually seen as a strength. (read on)

Myth: People feel put out when you ask for their help.

- No, we all need to help and welcome opportunities, when given the option to decline.

Myth: Highly successful people never ask for help.

- No, they actually ask more often, ask well, accept wisely.

'Asking for help' is not as easy as it sounds. Yet, not asking for help, or asking too late, can turn a manageable situation into something more serious. So, **how can you approach the task of asking?**

STEP 1: DEFINE WHAT'S GOING ON and accept that involving others can be helpful.

Look at the BIG PICTURE. What is coming up here? What would I like the outcome to be? If you give this some thought first, then you can set the stage for others to understand and help.

Let's use an example. You're having knee replacement surgery. Ask, what will be happening and when? How do I feel about it? What kinds of help will I need? For how long will I need help? What would success look like: a new hip and no infection? pain free movement? Are there others who can tell me more about the experience and possible outcomes so that I'll be more prepared to get the help I need? Engage deeply with people who are safe, and keep communications flowing.

STEP 2: PRIORITIZE and ORGANIZE.

With your list of what might be helpful to you (from help with grocery shopping to help with insurance forms) it's now time to focus on prioritizing.

It may not be possible to do it all. What's most important? Where are the holes? You can ask for help in identifying new sources for help with these. Again, there is benefit to asking others for ideas.

Then, **ask yourself: what am I willing to accept, from what sources?** If you can accept help, this step is also the "matching" step: **Whom do I ask? Where might help come from? Who might step in?** Once you've asked, it's time to evaluate offers, accepting, declining, or deferring offers of help. Each, of course, done with appreciation and kindness.

STEP 3: ACTUALLY ASK FOR SPECIFICS.

Consider writing yourself a script. What's going on? Invite help. Be direct, complete and specific. It's easier for folks to help if they know what you're looking for, and will accept. **So, think about: how to ask? In person? in an email? A letter? What exactly will I say? When?**

Unfolding the task through the written word, will help you set the tone for a conversation. **NOW you're ready to practice, practice, practice, and practice!** Reading over your written words will help you get your thoughts out and be more at ease when you talk directly to others. Each time you try you'll be more comfortable. Ask a friend or family member to role-play. Talking to yourself in the mirror can work wonders too. **Start with "is it okay if I ask you a question?"** Almost no one declines, and one "yes" usually opens a door to another.

STEP 4: AN "ASK" IS NOT A "DEMAND" - IT ALLOWS FOR "NO". Even "asking nicely" may end with a "no" response. Why? Because the person you asked is not available - they have a conflict; or they're not comfortable helping; or they're not capable of doing what you ask; or they're feel they can't do a good job - or any one of many other reasons!

Understanding this in advance is important for and possibly critical for your psyche, your friendships and your ability to ask again and again. **A "NO" reply is not personal. It's more about the other person's availability or limitations than it is about you!**

Pay attention to times when someone asks you for something and you decline. You'll soon see it's the same the other way around - **there are many reasons for a "no" and most have nothing to do with you!! It's the particular "ask" that's being rejected, not you!! Let's learn to accept the answer and say "thank you" for considering the request.**

STEP 5: KEEP ON GIVING TO OTHERS.

When you ask, even a "no" is helpful - maybe because that person can suggest another who can help or can give you some useful advice, maybe because their "no" clarifies your path. **We'll all be better at the task of asking if we also learn to receive with graciousness, to appreciate whatever is offered, whether it's exactly what we'd hoped for or not, and to pay back or forward as we're able.**

If you want to feel better, there's nothing like helping someone else.
Remember:

- **H**ave realistic expectations for the kind of help you're seeking,
- **E**xpress your needs simply and clearly,
- **L**et others know that you appreciate their help,
- **P**at yourself on the back for being brave enough to ask for help.

Some final thoughts:

- Understand that "simple" solutions don't always mean "easy" implementation.
- Remember, even when you ask for divine help, it may be through human hands and hearts that the help comes.
- Find people you really trust to try out asking for help first. This will allow you to open up bit by bit, and not be overly exposed.
- A problem is a problem, whatever its ease or difficulty - the litmus test is how much it is impacting you or preventing you from moving forward.
- Belittling your problem as not worthy of being solved only serves to make it even more challenging to cope with.