



Personal Safety Nets® e-Newsletter



Going Solo - We Are Changing

April 2012, Issue 49

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The New Norm

In "Going Solo," a new research book getting international attention for its focus upon "The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone", NYU Sociology Professor, [Eric Klinenberg](#), **dives into the myths and misconceptions about living alone.** For instance, Aristotle said, "The man who is isolated. . . or has no need to share because he is already self-sufficient . . . must therefore be either a beast or a god." From Biblical stories about the Garden of Eden, through Aristotle, the Greek poets, sociologists and primatologists, writers and researchers have noted that our species have organized themselves around the will to live with others, not alone.

But during the past half century, we have embarked on a remarkable social experiment - we have begun settling down as singletons.

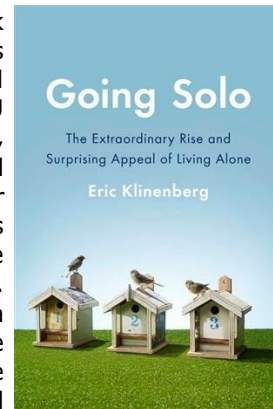
Today, more than 50% of American adults are single, and 31 million - roughly one out of every seven adults - lives alone. People who live alone make up 28% of all U.S. households, which means that they are now tied with "childless couples" as the most prominent residential type - more common than the nuclear

family, the multi-generational family, or the roommate or group home.

Let's compare that to 1950 when 22% of American adults were single. Four million lived alone, and they accounted for 9% of households. Living alone in 1950 was far more common in the sprawling Western states - Alaska, Montana, and Nevada - and was usually a short-lived stage on the road to a more conventional domestic life. Today living alone is most common in big cities - throughout the country. **In Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, there are between 35% and 45% of all households with just one person. In Manhattan, 1 of every 2 households is a one-person household.**

And lest you think this is only a phenomenon in America, living alone globally is skyrocketing, rising from about 153 million in 1996 to 277 million in 2011 - an increase of around 80% in 15 years.

What factors are diving this trend according to the



Letters . . . We Get Letters . . .



Editors Note: In our [March newsletter](#), we failed to give credit to Sue Mackey, from [The Mackey Group](#) & [Archskills](#), for her writing on the article "Who to Trust? For What? When?" You can also read her contribution to our [January 2012 newsletter](#).

Now to this month's letter

Dear PSN,
My sister has just gone thru a bad divorce, and has a final restraining order against her ex. She wants to protect her two children above all, and listened when I suggested re-writing her will. Now, however, she doesn't want to tell me what disposition she has made for guardianship of her children. I don't want to push, I don't think that I am the best choice for guardianship, but I do what to know who to contact in case of emergency. I also want to develop a relationship with whoever might be the guardian before any catastrophe ensues. Any advice on how I can point out the advantages to my sister?
Thanks, Mary





Mary, congratulations on having a big heart and willingness to reach out to your sister. Your impulses seem to be right on track. It's a really good idea to have all the people who might be supportive to the children be connected. If your sister is addressing guardianship wishes, she should get legal advice too, regarding the proper legal designations, beyond a will, that will have the greatest protective power. (you might use our Wallet Cards as a starting place for talking.) Having a conversation with your sister about your wish to be supportive, alongside your concern regarding guardianship, might be a first step. It's possible she has the same concern and doesn't want to hurt your feelings by being clear. Be calm and centered as far as your own emotions go before entering this conversation. Let us know how it goes.

On the Road . . . Our May Schedule

May 1st will find us at [ANEW](#) (a non-profit organization linking women to apprenticeships and liveable wage jobs in trades) for our quarterly seminar for their students. **May 2nd** we'll be presenting PSN to [Bellevue's Aging Services](#) section of Parks & Community. **May 16th** we'll man a booth at the [Senior Services Breakfast](#). You can be part of our *open-to-the public seminar* at [King County Library @ Lake Hills](#) on *May 18th* or at [Freedom Church](#) in Seattle on *May 19th*.



not a solitary experience. Through technology we can stay at home and stay connected.

Urbanization is the third factor. Cities support a subculture of single people who live on their own but want to be out in public with each other. this makes being single a much more collective experience.

Longer longevity (the fourth factor) has been more beneficial to women - living longer than spouses - sometimes by 5, 10 or 20 years - and usually in these later years they choose to live alone.



The solo dwellers today are primarily women: 18 million compared to 14 million men. More than 15 million living singly, are between thirty-five and sixty-four. 10 million are elderly. Yet young adults between 18-34 are the fastest-growing segment of the solo-dwelling population.

[Klinenberg](#) tells us his research has lead him to make a strong distinction between living alone and being alone or being lonely. "People will live alone whenever and wherever they can afford to do it. . . . At certain times in modern lives, living alone is the more desirable state. **For young professionals, it's a sign of success and a mark of distinction, a way to gain freedom and experience the anonymity that can make city life so exhilarating.**" Similarly, for someone divorced, it's a way to reassert control and often move away from the loneliness of a bad marriage.

As it relates to building your personal safety net, Professor Klinenberg says, "Americans are quite anxious about isolation. **We believe in self-reliance, but we also long for community.** We make the assumption that when someone is alone, there's something wrong, and they don't have what they want or need."

"We need to make a distinction between living alone and being alone, or being isolated, or feeling lonely. These are all different things. In fact, people who live alone tend to spend more time socializing with friends and neighbors than people who are married. . . living alone is not an entirely solitary experience. It's generally a quite social one."



research conducted by Professor Klinenberg?

First is the rise of women. The mass entry into the labor force has meant more and more women can and are delaying marriage, support themselves, leaving a marriage when needed, and buying their own home.

Second is the communications revolution. Today, living alone is



Now is the perfect time for you to pick up the phone (206-659-0665) or [email](#) and schedule a time for the staff of Personal Safety Nets® to come and work with your group or organization.

Editor's Note: Please check directly with these organizations before attending to see if they can accommodate you.

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) even 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 both an emergency, and for all challenges that may come your way. **The new and improved wallet card is**



So next time you hear of a friend or relative living alone, try not to jump to conclusions.

Are they isolated or independent? Do they have close connections with safe networks of friends and family? Do they seem to be reaching out for help or content.

Stay in touch, keep your eyes and ears open - are they expressing their need for privacy or are they becoming isolated and distant from those around them. There is a difference.

(Steven Kurutz of the New York Times takes a quirky and humorous [look](#) at what it can mean, and what you can do when you live alone.)

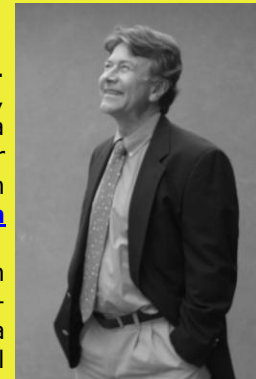
John Gibson Talks PSN on the Radio

Personal Safety Nets authors, Dr. John W. Gibson and Judy Pigott, are out in Lincoln, Nebraska for a workshop at the Plaza Conference Center, BryanLGH East, and for some work with the staff and administration of [BryanLGH College of Health Sciences](#).

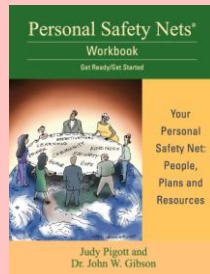
John was asked to be on the radio in Lincoln in advance of their appearance - www.kfor1240.com - and provided a wonderfully clear explanation of Personal Safety Nets, and examples of how they can be used.

If you've always wanted to hear about Personal Safety Nets, or if you'd just love to hear John's wonderful voice, give a listen:

<http://podcast.kfor1240.com/kfor2/3428133.mp3>



Get Your Copy of Our Workbook: Get Ready/Get Started 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.

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!
Send your self addressed, stamped envelope to:
**PSN, 4740 44th Ave SW,
Suite 102, Seattle, WA 98116**

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