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WORKING WITHOUT A NET

Skeptic that I am, I agreed only somewhat reluctantly to go to the Great Laconia Circus last Saturday. It occurred to me that the 'Show' might be disappointing and that we were going to prove showman P.T. Barnum's adage that there is a '*sucker born every minute*'. I'm glad to report that my concerns were unfounded and that it was a wonderful event that I am glad to have attended. I was very impressed – they did a Great Job!

While all of the acts were performed with due consideration to safety in terms of the use of harnesses and spotters – there were still times when the performers were working '*without a net*' relying on their skill and knowing that in the event of error or equipment failure that the results could be tragic. Although the performers took significant risks – they managed those risks very well.

The rest of us should do the same. Lately I have been seeing a great many couples come in where one is the primary caregiver of the other. These are people dealing with some very complex personal and medical situations all on their own and doing a great job with it. They are an inspiration to me in terms of their courage, their commitment and their spirit of optimism. They come to see me because they realize that although they are doing very well on their own – that they are literally getting by without the benefit of any kind of safety net. One misstep, one unexpected problem and everything could unravel in a hurry.

The standard advice given to all caregivers is that if you do not take care of yourself – that there is no way that you can be sure that you can take care of anyone else. Caregivers – especially when they are the spouse – are wonderfully unselfish, completely dedicated but sometimes suffer from an invincibility

complex. They feel that as long as they are taking care of someone else that nothing can happen to them. Mother nature and older bodies are not always so accommodating.

This is where I suggest to people that we all need to have a *'Hit by the Bus'* plan of what would happen to those we care for if something unexpectedly happened to those doing the caring. If we don't have a *'Hit by the Bus'* plan then we are working without a net – and in so doing taking unnecessary chances for both the cared for and the care giver.

What should that plan be? It is and should be very different for each person and will change from year to year. The best plan is the one that gives you the most options in the event that the unthinkable happens. Tempting fate by not creating your own safety net means always living on the edge making it very difficult to enjoy life.

My old motorcycles all had 'reserve' tanks that had a little valve selector I would move when I ran out of gas in the main tank and if done deftly I could continue on without missing a beat. That reserve tank was my *'safety net'* and gave me confidence. New bikes have gauges and low fuel lights and while all that is nice – I still miss my *'safety net'* of knowing that when all else fails that I have another 30 miles to go.

If you are the primary caregiver for someone else – I would encourage you to look for some help in building your own *'safety net'* and to develop that plan of what would happen if you were to be *'Hit by the Bus'*. While this might not exactly be fun stuff to think about it – it is very very important to do.

While the aerial performers and the human jugglers of the Circus all take some very calculated risks to thrill the audience with death defying acts ---- What works in the Circus doesn't work outside of the Big Top!

Age Well!

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