

Support Maps

There are times in life when people need support. It is important to know who you can go to for different kinds of support. This activity will help you with this.

STEP 1: CREATE YOUR SUPPORT MAP

- a) Starting in the center of the map on page 3, it's important to learn how to be your own best friend. List three ways that you take care of yourself when you feel stressed. Examples: Do a hobby or sport, exercise, prayer or meditation, journal, listen to music, etc.
- b) Moving outward, who do *you* consider "family"? Some people consider blood and legal ties as family. Others consider close friends to be "family". It's up to you. List the first names and last initial of each person YOU consider to be your family.
- c) Next, define your extended family, friends, and casual contacts.
- d) In the outer circle, list social and professional systems that provide support. Examples: medical professionals, churches, social clubs, schools, employers, social services, etc.

STEP 2: WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT?

There are four kinds of support as shown below. Next to each person on your map, label the type of support this person or group gives you. Some might be just one type. Others might be all four.

A- *Emotional* which includes loving, caring, listening, and empathy

B- *Sense of belonging* which includes providing a sense of being cared about and included. This might look like doing things together, having fun, traditions, holidays, etc.

C- *Instrumental* which is providing services or resources like money, housing, caregiving, etc.

D- *Informational* which involves helping gather information or providing advice

STEP 3: MAKING YOUR SUPPORT LIST

On page 4, list each person in the area of support they can provide. Some people might be in every category, some might be in none. That's okay. You may also find that there are people in your life who are "close" to you but they are either unsupportive or unsafe.

"Unsafe" means people who have hurt or are likely to hurt you. This includes: shoots you down, gossips, won't listen to you, disrespects you, or shares your private confidences with others. "No support" means you have gone to this person and been refused support or you are sure that he or she is unable to give a certain type of support.

STEP 4: USING YOUR SUPPORT LIST

When you need support, who should you go to? First, identify what kind of support you need: money, babysitting, advice, a listening ear, a ride to the doctor's office, a hug? Then check that section for possible sources of support.

While all four types of support are important, research suggests that **emotional support** has the biggest influence on health. This is crucial to consider when a family member has been diagnosed with a medical condition.

Support Maps

If you aren't seeing many people- at least one- in the emotional support category, ask yourself what you can do to change this. Is there someone in your life that you don't know very well but could make a connection with?

Comparing your map with that of other family members can be interesting. We need to ask ourselves: am I being a good support person for my partner and children? If not, how can I change this?

RIPPLES: Keeping your support map in mind, when a person has a crisis, it is like throwing a rock in the water. Where is the biggest disturbance? In the center. And the ripples are deeper closer to the center. Then they move outward until they disappear.



Your support map is also like this. When crisis hits, those closest to you are hit the hardest. Of course, YOU are at the center; ground zero. Know that those closest to you are also struggling. They might not know what to say to you or how to help. They may end up saying or doing the wrong things. Misunderstandings can easily happen.

So the best time to set up a strong support system is when a crisis is not happening. Build your own support network during the good times. And let them know what kind of support you need.

References:

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SOCIAL & PROFESSIONAL SYSTEMS

- A- Emotional
- B- Sense of Belonging
- C- Instrumental
- D- Informational

EXTENDED FAMILY & FRIENDS

MY FAMILY

TAKING CARE OF ME

MY SUPPORT LIST

A. EMOTIONAL

B. SENSE OF BELONGING

C. INSTRUMENTAL

D. INFORMATIONAL

NO SUPPORT OR UNSAFE