

Social Support

A social support network is made up of friends, family and peers. Social support is different from a support group, which is generally a structured meeting run by a lay leader or mental health professional.

Although both support groups and support networks can play an important role in times of stress, a social support network is something you can develop when you are not under stress. It provides the comfort of knowing that your friends are there for you if you need them.

You do not need to formalise your support network. A coffee break with a friend at work, a quick chat with a neighbour, a phone call to your sibling, a visit to a house of worship or volunteer work are all ways to develop and foster lasting relationships with others.

The forms of assistance that are given through social support come in many forms, and have a significant impact on a person's well-being.

Social support can take different forms:

- Emotional (sometimes called non-tangible) support refers to the actions people take to make someone else feel cared for
- Instrumental support refers to the physical, such as money and housekeeping
- Informational support means providing information to help someone

Benefits of social support include improved physical health, greater resilience to stress, a feeling of security, and more. Whether from a trusted group or valued individual, social support has been shown to reduce the psychological and physiological consequences of stress, and may enhance immune function. Social networks, whether formal (such as a church or social club) or informal (meeting with friends) provide a sense of belonging, security, and community.

- The benefits of social support network can include:
- Improving the ability to cope with stressful situations.
- Alleviating the effects of emotional distress.
- Promoting lifelong good mental health.
- Enhancing self-esteem.
- Lowering cardiovascular risks, such as lowering blood pressure.

The **Social Support** worksheet will help you to learn about, and explore, their social support system. It explains the benefits of social support, types of support, and ways to build social support and help guide you to explore your own support system with questions about barriers, how supports could be used to deal with current problems, and more.

Resources:

Social Support worksheet

My Social Support Network (diagram)

My thoughts about social support (worksheet)

Types of Social Support (worksheet)

How to create a social support network in your life

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-create-social-support-in-your-life-3144955>

How Social Support Contributes to Psychological Health

<https://www.verywellmind.com/social-support-for-psychological-health-4119970>

