

Stress and Support Systems

Creating a network of individuals who are there to help can enhance your self-esteem and make you better able to handle any situation. By having people you can go to during the good times (and the not-so-good times) you will be more likely to be a happy and healthy individual.

Close friends and family are common members of an emotional support system, but there are others.

Here are some examples of people who may be able to give emotional support:

- immediate and extended family members
- friends
- fellow parents in your community
- friends you've met at your place of worship
- teachers
- people who share the same hobbies or are part of your special interest group (like a volunteer group or sports team)
- neighbors
- exercise partners
- Clergy members
- therapists or counselors

It can also help to comprise a career support system of coworkers and members of professional organizations. Some examples of people who can help support your career are:

- coworkers
- supervisors
- members of your HR department or your EAP mentors
- career advisors

As you build and use a support system, it's helpful to realize that having a support system requires you to both give and take. In order to build healthy relationships with those in your support group, know that these people have needs just like you. Follow these steps to build healthy relationships in your support system:

- Give attention- Find out about the members of your support group. Ask about their hobbies, likes, dislikes, families, and friends.
- Learn to take advice- Ask for advice from your support group. This will create a sense of trust and closeness between you, and people may be more willing to help you succeed.
- Give praise- Praise a member of your support system when he or she does something well.
- Take the first step to get to know someone- Make new friends or coworkers feel comfortable by inviting them out to lunch.
- Give help- When a friend is asking you for help, follow through when and if you can. You'll be more likely to have a solid group of people willing to give help to you if you give help to others.

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