



# Identifying Sources of Support and Friendship

## The Support Network

People experiencing unemployment report they feel better if they have the support of family and friends. Your informal support networks are the personal ties you have with others. Friends, relatives and other people you turn to for comfort, advice or help are your “support system.”

Your informal support network helps in many ways. For example, they can:

- listen to your concerns
- brainstorm ideas and help you think about alternative plans
- comfort you when you’re down
- help with material needs

## Your Support Network

To help you identify your support system, answer the following questions. Write in the names of people who give you support now.

- Who listens to me when I need someone to talk to?
- Who appreciates me for what I do?
- Who stands up for me, even when they might not totally agree with what I’m doing?
- When I need advice, to whom do I go?
- When I have a problem, to whom do I turn?
- Whom do I look to when I want to share good or bad news?
- Who helps me make decisions when I need to think through options and consequences?
- Who appreciates me?

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The people you named for each of these questions are an important part of your life. You depend on them. They form your informal support network. In turn, you also give them support.

As you look over the people you named, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there one or two people (spouse or friend) whose names show up often? Am I leaning too heavily on these members of my support network? Depending on a limited number of people can cause them to feel burdened.
- Are there needs I have that are not being met? Which of these needs are most important to me now? I may have different needs in the near future and require different people in my support system.
- Who else could fill the needs I have?
- Who could help me meet my needs if I were to take the risk of asking? Think about people who can help me with problem solving, not just family and friends who reinforce current feelings.
- What specific steps could I take to expand my support network? What things can I do this week? Next week?

## Building a Support Network

Part of your daily goal should be making and finding friendships that will add to your support network. This process is like making a patchwork quilt: a variety of different pieces are added over the years. Sometimes an unusual piece adds some special quality that you had not expected. Sometimes, too, you'll need to patch over places where the material has faded or worn thin.

Supportive friendships often come about indirectly from working and socializing with others. In order for this to occur, it is often necessary to first take time for others.

- volunteer your time to community groups and organizations
- visit your neighbors
- join a club or hobby group

Your support system may help you through the stress of unemployment. By reaching out to others and taking advantage of their support and friendship, you can gain strength to deal with your problems and an ability to take control of your situation.

In addition to your personal support network, you can call upon community agencies for support.

## References

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