

Building Your Support Network

Research shows that having a good support network based on strong relationships is vital for wellbeing. As humans we have a need to feel connected to others and feel a sense of belonging; but most importantly, our social connections often provide us with the resilience and support we need throughout our lives.

Identifying Your Current Support Network

Identifying the people you can go to for support can be reassuring, so first you need to think about who is currently in your support network. This could be colleagues, friends, family and/or acquaintances. To help you do this, write down the names of the people you think of (both personally and professionally) when reading the following questions:

Who do you have the most fun with?	Who usually gives you the best advice?	Who would you talk to if you were in need of urgent help?
Who do you feel you can be yourself around the most?	Who would you feel comfortable crying in front of?	Who would you go to for a hug?
Who do you have the most positive memories with?	Who do you want to share your good or bad news with?	Who makes you feel good or boosts your confidence?

Reviewing Your Support Network

The people identified in the task above all play an important role in your life, they are your support system. But now that you have their names written down on paper, you should consider the following:

- Is there a good mix of people who would help you see things in different ways?
- Is there anyone who you would consider as supportive but did not fit any of the questions above? Feel free to add their name and how they support you to the list.
- Is there anyone on this list who also has a negative effect on your wellbeing?
- Are there any gaps in your current network e.g. support needs that are currently not met? Who might be able to fill those gaps?

Developing Your Support Network

Everyone will encounter a time when their current support network does not work as well you would like, which is why we should always endeavour to continuously develop our connections. Here are five key tips to help you expand and maintain your support network:



Make time to keep in touch with your network regularly, this can be physically or virtually. Putting time and effort into your connections will build strong relationships that will provide positive benefits down the line.



Give back to the people who support you. Remember that support is a two-way street so ensure you are checking in, listening to and supporting others where possible too.



Actively try to meet new people whether it be through attending networking events, social activities or classes. Even if it means stepping out of your comfort zone, it takes courage and effort to create new connections.



Be happy to let go of people who do not fulfil your support needs. You do not have to like everyone and it is okay if you have grown apart from someone you were once close with.



Build your self-awareness so that you know what support you need and the kinds of people who add positivity to your life.

Remember...

If you are looking for specialist, professional mental health support, take a look at The Everymind at Work [Mental Health Support Directory](#) for more information.

You can [invest in your own mental health](#) as well as seeking support from others to better enable you to support yourself through life's ups and downs.