

2022 Mental Health Month: Connect to Wellness

SUPPORT ON YOUR WELLNESS JOURNEY

Having a healthy social support network can help you on your mental health and wellness journey. Social support can decrease depression and loneliness and build you up during times of stress. Supporters may include friends, family, community, spiritual leaders, health care providers, peer support providers, etc.

People living with mental health challenges helped create this document to help you identify characteristics of a good supporter and steps to developing a strong support network.

Characteristics of a good supporter:

Supporters are people who:

- Care about you
- Validate you and your experience
- Accept you as you are
- Advocate for you
- Enjoy sharing fun and interesting activities with you

The most valuable thing a supporter can do for us when we are having a very difficult time is to listen. A good supporter knows that unsolicited advice, criticism, and judgements won't help and may even make matters worse.

Steps to Developing a Strong Support System

1. Become an active member of a support group.
 - Support groups provide an opportunity to be with people who have similar challenges, people who understand and can be mutually supportive.
 - They are places where people can make new and lasting friendships.
 - They counter social isolation.
 - Basic support group rules help people feel comfortable and safe
2. Participate in community activities, special interest groups and/or spiritual gatherings.
 - The hardest part is going the first time. Give yourself a pat on the back for getting there.
 - If you meet people with shared interests, plan to get together again.

If you are in crisis:

Call Crisis Connections at [206-461-3222](tel:206-461-3222) or [1-866-427-4747](tel:1-866-427-4747), or visit www.CrisisConnections.org. Crisis Connections can help link you to available and appropriate resources and their services lines are available 24/7.

3. Volunteer in service to others.
 - Find a worthy organization that would benefit from you volunteering your unique skills and talents. Volunteering increases your social network and can help build self-esteem.
4. Stay connected with those you care about and those that care about you.
 - Get together for fun activities-like walks, games, and arts and crafts.
 - Consider using phone calls, handwritten notes and cards, emails, text messages, online meeting platforms, and social networking websites to keep in touch.
5. Nurture mutually supportive relationships
 - Be there for others as much as they are there for you. If your supporter is not asking as much of you as you are asking of them, consider doing them a needed favor.

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