Your support system can help with handling stress and can promote satisfaction, meaning, and fulfillment in life. Support systems can consist of relationships with many types of people, such as: family members, friends, co-workers, or classmates. You are unique in the type and the number of relationships you want and in the kinds of support you need.

**What are the benefits of social support?**
- Personal satisfaction
- Feelings of connection and caring
- Improved self-esteem
- Improved physical and mental health
- Stress reduction and resiliency

**How do I feel about my current support system?**
Like our individual relationships, our support systems are always changing. Consider your current support system in the box below. Ask yourself these questions:

- *Do I feel supported?*
- *How do I feel about the number and quality of relationships in my life?*
How can I create more relationships with people?

- Find good places to meet people
- Choose relatable topics
- Show interest by tuning in and asking questions
- Smile, nod, and use good eye contact
- Limit your personal disclosure in the beginning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Possible Conversation Topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wedding</td>
<td>Relationship to couple getting married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>Coffee, traffic, family, hobbies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can I improve the quality of my existing relationships?

What you can **say** and **do**:

- Share your positive feelings
- Give people sincere compliments
- Ask people about their thoughts & feelings
- Share something about yourself
- Share your common interests with people
- Show you care by being helpful or thoughtful
- Be willing to compromise with people
- Try to understand the other person’s viewpoint
What personal information should I share about myself?

Close relationships involve gradually increasing levels of disclosure between two people. Deciding what to disclose is a very personal decision. You can think of three levels of disclosure:

- **Low**: sharing things about yourself that are not highly personal
- **Medium**: somewhere between low and high
- **High**: sharing very personal information about yourself

Where can I find support and educational resources?

  [https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/people-with-mental-health-problems/index.html](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/people-with-mental-health-problems/index.html)
- Michigan Medicine Depression Center Toolkit:
  [http://depressiontoolkit.org/takecare/support_systems.asp](http://depressiontoolkit.org/takecare/support_systems.asp)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):
  [http://www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

The goal is to have positive, rewarding, helpful relationships and to create a support system that works for you as an individual. The diagram on the following page shows how you and the people in your life may interact within a support system. Filling in the gears can help you understand what part of your support system you may want to focus on.
People who support me:

I can be supportive to others by:

Aspects of relationships I would like to change:
References


Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

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