



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

Social Support

Having positive, fulfilling, and helpful relationships.

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

Location:	Possible Conversation Topic:
wedding	Relationship to couple getting married
work	Coffee, traffic, family, hobbies

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:

Disclosure

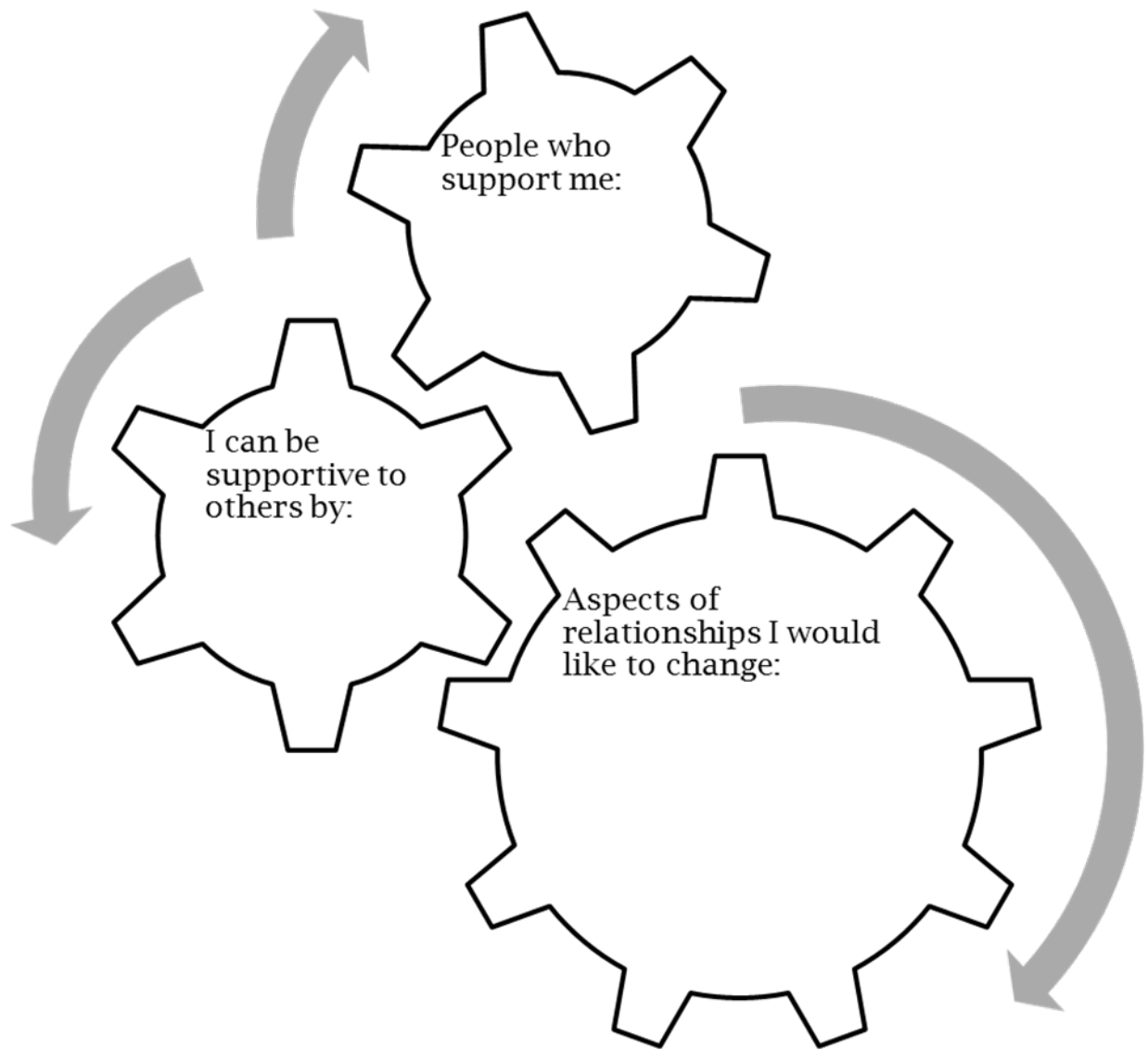
Telling someone personal information about yourself.

- **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?

- Mental Health.gov: “Build Your Support System”:
<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/people-with-mental-health-problems/index.html>
- Michigan Medicine Depression Center Toolkit:
http://depressiontoolkit.org/takecare/support_systems.asp
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):
<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.



References

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Illness Management and Recovery Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Kit*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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