UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Identifying Sources of Support and Friendship

The Support Network

People experiencing tough times 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, a support person:

1. Listens to your concerns.
2. Helps think about alternative plans and brainstorm ideas.
3. Comforts you when you're down.
4. Helps with material needs.

Identifying Your Support Network

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

1. Who listens to you when you need someone to talk to?
2. With whom do you share good or bad news?
3. Who appreciates you?
4. Who appreciates you for what you do?
5. Who stands up for you, even when they might not totally agree with what you're doing?
6. When you need advice, to whom do you go?
7. When you have a problem, to whom do you turn?
8. Who helps you make decisions when you need to think through options and consequences?

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.

Make a list of people who you can rely on:

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

1. Are there one or two people (spouse or friend) whose name shows up often? Are you leaning too heavily on these members of your support network?
2. Do you have needs that are not being met? Which of these needs are most important to you now?
3. Who else could fill the needs you have?
4. Who could help you meet your needs if you were to take the risk of asking?
5. What specific steps could you take to expand your support network? What things can you do this week? Next week?

Building A Support Network

Part of your daily goal should be making 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 you may 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. For this to occur, it is often necessary to first reach out to others by:

1. Taking time for your family.
2. Volunteering your time to community groups and organizations.
3. Visiting your neighbors.
4. Joining a club or hobby group.

Your support system may help you through the stress of a personal financial crisis. 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 use community agencies for support. If you need help for a specific issue such as employment, housing, financial assistance or other needs, dial 211 on your phone to talk to someone who will connect you to resources available in your area. You can also visit the website: https://www.delaware211.org/

By reaching out and building your network, you will have more resources and support to help you cope with challenging times.

Revised for Delaware by Maria Pippidis, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension from University of Illinois Extension | Getting Through Tough Financial Times series

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