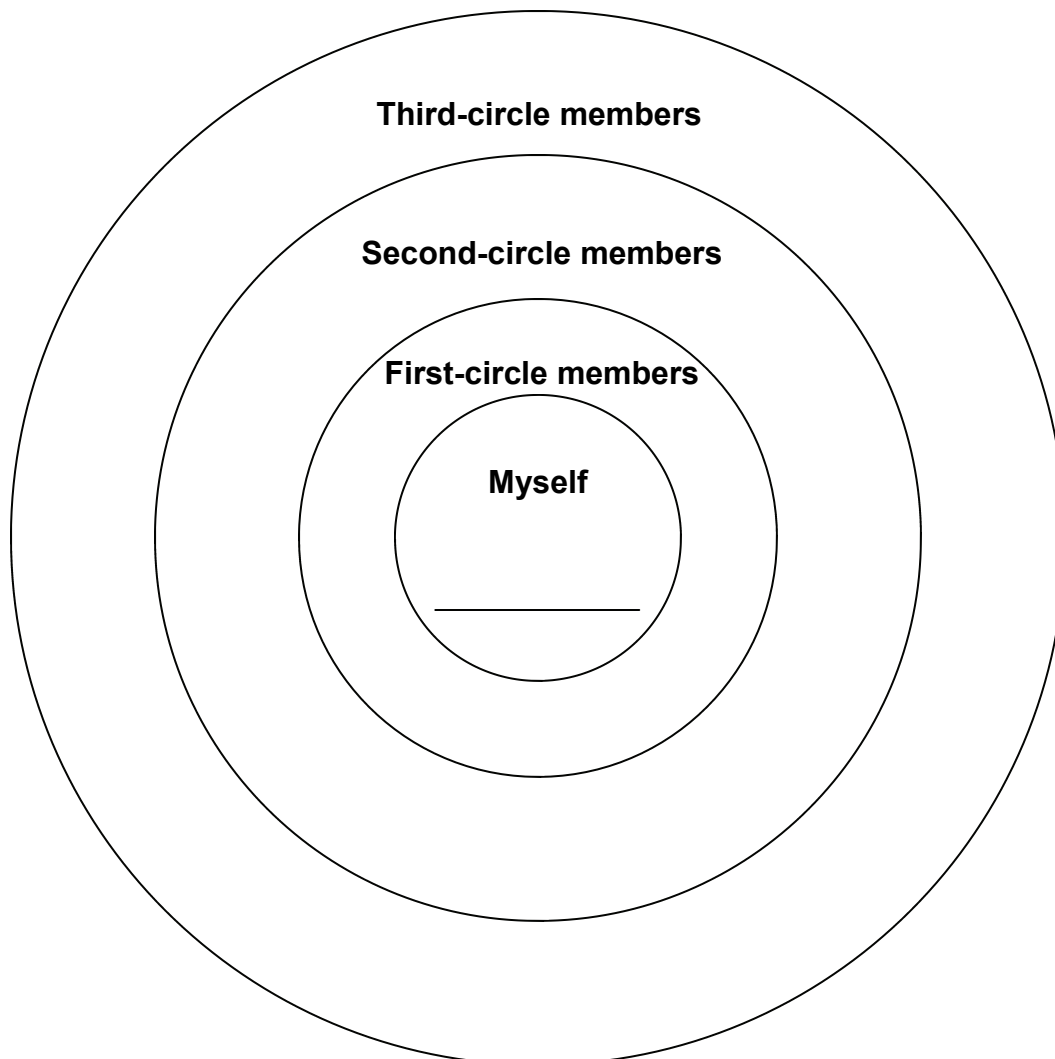


WHO IS A MEMBER OF YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK?

What does your support network look like? Grab a pen or pencil and find out!

MY SUPPORT NETWORK

1. Write your name in the center.
2. In the first ring from the center, write the names of those individuals you confide in most and depend on first for emotional support. These individuals are the significant others you love and care about.
3. In the second ring, list those individuals you are not as emotionally close to as first-circle members, but who still might be helpful to you.
4. In the third and outermost ring, list those individuals or agencies you have little personal involvement with, but could provide you with needed assistance.



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Evaluate Existing Support

Now that you've taken a look at your personal support network, ask yourself the following:

1. Do I feel satisfied with the number of members in each circle of support within my support network?
2. Do I need/want to add to my support network?
3. Do I feel satisfied with the quality of relationships in each circle of support? Are my needs for emotional support being met?
4. Do I need/want to strengthen some friendships in my first and second circles?
5. Do I need to discover more about possible support in my community to build a better third circle support?

If you want to improve your support network, you can improve existing support and/or create new support.

Strengthen Family Support

Strong family relationships often provide the foundation for strong social support. If you find your family support is weak, encourage family members to communicate their joys, needs, and sorrows and to express appreciation for each other. Spending quality time together also can help strengthen your family support.

Things You Do To Keep Friends...

- ◇ Accept the other person.
- ◇ Appreciate the other person.
- ◇ Encourage the other person.
- ◇ Put yourself in the other person's place.
- ◇ Don't nag at or argue with the other person.
- ◇ Tell the other person whenever you make a mistake or do something wrong.
- ◇ Try to make the other person feel better about his or her mistakes and wrong doings.
- ◇ Do something special to show you like the other person.

Create New Support

If you find you need special support that isn't available from your existing network, you may need to seek out a specific community support group, such as Widow-to-Widow group. Or you may need to start your own support group.

Here are some guidelines for starting and maintaining a strong community support group:

1. Ask people with similar needs to join you. You might know some potentially interested individuals. If not, your minister might know who to contact and may even help you start the group. Advertisements and announcements on community bulletin boards also may help you recruit group members.
2. Have regular meetings for designated lengths of time.
3. Alternate responsibility for finding a meeting place.
4. Alternate responsibility for the group's activities.
5. Evaluate the group's progress once every three months. Share expectations and needs. Ask if the group should continue to meet.

Want to enrich your life through social supports? You can start today by extending your friendship and support. Call a lonely neighbor. Have coffee with a friend. Accept your child's offer to help. Remember, strong social support networks are built when you are willing to give as well as receive.

Things You Do to Make Friends...

- ◇ Make the other person feel special.
- ◇ Make the other person feel important.
- ◇ Make the other person feel that you are interested in him or her.
- ◇ Call the other person by his or her name as often as you can.
- ◇ Listen carefully to the other person.
- ◇ Talk to the other person.
- ◇ Talk to the other person about things that interest him or her.