

EXERCISE 4

YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM - A SELF-ASSESSMENT

We all need a strong support system, especially in times of change. But it takes time and focus to build and maintain a good support system based on mutual understanding and trust. This means you must always make sure you maintain your support system. Many of us are not aware of our support system and how important it is for our motivation and survival. This exercise could help both you and your group to see and understand your present support system, but also to identify areas for improvement. In times of changes in our daily situation we need different forms of support from people in order to get through the period of transition. Our support system should consist of someone who challenges us, provides new perspectives, encourages us, comforts us or simply spends time with us. No one person can assume all these different roles, which is why we need to look over our support system and identify who and what support each person can offer.

Purpose and objective

- To collectively review our individual support system and emphasise the need to constantly build and maintain a good support system.
- At the end of the exercise everyone should be able to examine their individual support system and identify their individual needs for improving their support system.

Steps to take

1. Introduce the purpose and objective of this exercise.
2. Explain the need for a strong support system and the different types of support you may need.
3. Hand out the assessment of "My Support System". Ask everyone to take some time to complete the assessment (approx. 15 min).
4. Give everyone a few minutes to reflect individually on these results and ask them to write down their conclusions on a piece of paper. After a while, encourage the group to break into pairs and share what they have written (this is voluntary). Close by sharing your reflections with the whole group. Write key comments and conclusions on the whiteboard or flipchart so that everyone can read them.
5. Ask everyone to review their support system and identify what forms of support they feel are most important for them at this time. Encourage them to list at least 2-3 names next to the most important items.
6. Conclude the session by encouraging everyone to define what they will do over the next month to improve their support system. Agree on when and how you intend to follow up and reflect on the group's progress.

Time needed

You will need 45 minutes, including the introduction, exercise and reflection.

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SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW

A satisfactory support system provides a security base, a sense of belonging and acceptance. It can also contribute to boosting our self-confidence, improving our skills and providing various tips on how to handle our own stress. It includes different types of relationships on different levels and satisfies particular needs. Support means different things to different people and the need for support changes as life changes.

Close friends are part of the support system. Other sources of support that we need from time to time are listed below. Think about what type of support (if any) you would like from each of these sources. Indicate the level on which you receive this support. Do not worry if you cannot fill in every section.

	Type	Who/what	Satisfaction				
			Low	Average	High		
1	Close friends	_____	1	2	3	4	5
2	Family	_____	1	2	3	4	5
3	Specialists (doctors, consultants and so on)	_____	1	2	3	4	5
4	Helpers	_____	1	2	3	4	5
5	Reference groups, e.g. people of the same sex, same profession or who share the same hobby or are in the same sports team	_____	1	2	3	4	5
6	Challengers	_____	1	2	3	4	5
7	Admirers	_____	1	2	3	4	5
8	Prime movers (contact sources, people who arrange contacts)	_____	1	2	3	4	5
9	Energy movers (people I find exciting)	_____	1	2	3	4	5
10	People of a similar mind	_____	1	2	3	4	5
11	Financiers (people who control funding)	_____	1	2	3	4	5
12	Evaluators	_____	1	2	3	4	5
13	Mentors (models, teachers)	_____	1	2	3	4	5
14	_____	1	2	3	4	5
15	_____	1	2	3	4	5

EXERCISE 4

Support system review (cont)

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

16 The extent of my present support system is

17 The mix in my present support system is

18 I use my support system

19 The most important things to change in my support system are: