

Worksheet for Establishing a Support System

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

A social support system consists of a network of relationships with people who support your recovery and offer help to meet your needs. Your support system may consist of family, friends, professionals (i.e., doctor, counselor, dietician, personal trainer, etc.), twelve step meeting members, coworkers, neighbors, spouse, children, or any one with whom you have a more than superficial relationship. People that utilize an active support system for their recovery have a higher probability of sustained abstinence and continuing recovery.

Socializing and social contact with others helps to reduce isolation, depression, loneliness, boredom, and stress. Social support systems serve as a major tool not only to assist you in staying clean and sober, but with improving your physical and mental health, to improve your problem solving, and to enhance emotional development and maturity. Everyone has a need to feel like they fit in, belong, and are wanted. So many things change in your life with recovery. A social support system helps you know that you are not alone while you are making these changes.

To assess your support system needs and to assemble a support system helpful to your ongoing recovery efforts, answer the following questions:

A. Who was in your support system before you got into recovery?

Name	Kind of support they provided	Are they drinkers/drug users?	Did you drink/use with them?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

B. Who of this group, do I need to NOT spend time with right now, and why?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

C. What do I need from a social support system now?

- Someone to discuss a personal problem
 - Someone to spend time with
 - Someone to do things with (shopping, movies, walks, sporting events, going out to eat, etc.)
 - Someone to help me with tasks (gardening, fixing something that is broken, taking care of my dog when I am out of town, etc.)
 - Someone that can cheer me up when I am down
 - Someone that reminds me that I am worthwhile and is on my side
 - Someone to give me important feedback
 - Someone to teach me how to do things
 - Someone to work out with
 - Someone to provide comfort when I am scared, lonely, tired
 - Someone that I can share my feelings with
 - Someone who helps me achieve the next great thing in my life
 - Someone who helps me find things that I need
 - Someone who can serve as an accountability partner
 - Someone who will tell me when my thinking is squirrely
 - Someone that calls me on my dishonesty
 - Someone that helps me identify my motives
 - Someone that knows how to stay clean and sober and can teach me
 - Someone who helps me solve problems by asking questions, giving me feedback, and making suggestions.
 - Someone who can help me learn how to have fun sober
 - Someone that can give me a ride to meetings
 - Others _____
-

D. List reasons why a recovering alcoholic/addict might need a network of people who support his or her continuing abstinence and ongoing recovery.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Look over your list and identify which ones could be true for you. Instead of thinking of reasons why these reasons for a support group do not apply to you, identify the ones that could possibly be true.

E. When I stop spending time with people that might not be good for my continuing recovery at this time, who will be left in my support system?

Name	Type of support	Notes

F. When I compare the list of what I need from a support system (C) with the list of who will be left in my support system (E), what needs will not be met by my remaining support system as it is now.

- 1.
- 2.

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

G. Who (among the people that I already know), do I need/want to cultivate as a support person to round out my support network at this time?

Name	Type of support	Notes

H. List other resources (places, groups, activities, etc.) that could help me meet new people to add to my support network.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I. What might keep me from asking people to be in my support system, to be my friend, or to cultivate relationships?

- It is difficult for me to ask for help.
- I am shy
- I have social anxiety
- I don't want to tell anybody else that I am in recovery or that I have addiction.
- I don't know anybody that would be appropriate.
- I don't want to be a burden to anyone.

- I feel guilty about things that have happened in the past.
 - My spouse/partner gets jealous of my spending time with other people.
 - I asked people to do things with me in the past and nothing came of it.
 - I don't have time.
 - I end up providing all the support to the other person.
 - I am afraid that I will be rejected.
 - I don't want to sound helpless.
 - I don't want to be vulnerable by opening up to others.
 - I don't like the suggestions that other people offer.
 - Others _____
-
-

**J. What might I do to overcome these obstacles to ask people for help and support?
If I need to meet new people, where can I go or what can I do to accomplish that?**

- Ask someone to coffee, lunch, dinner.
 - Ask someone to go to the movies, the theater, roller skating, fishing, or some other activity _____
 - Ask someone to go to a support group meeting with me.
 - Ask someone to start working out with me.
 - Volunteer with some organization to help other people.
 - Go to twelve step recovery meetings. Go early; stay late, talk to people.
 - Attend church.
 - Reconcile with people who may still be mad at me.
 - Make an appointment with professional helper(s) such as minister, counselor, psychiatrist, nutritionist, personal trainer, recovery coach, etc.
 - Join community organization(s).
 - Taking a class; joining a group like yoga/meditation/stress management
 - Others _____
-
-
-

J. My Call To Action.

Today, I will _____

This week, I will _____

This month, I will _____

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By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

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