



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Champlain East
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

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Social Support

The past two years have been hard for everyone due to the pandemic. Opportunities for social gatherings have been restricted, which has been difficult for many. The lack of social support that this has caused has been greatly felt.

We all need to feel like we belong and that others care about our well-being. Social support is exactly that: the belonging and care we receive from other people.

Now that public health measures have become less restrictive, opportunities to put in place situations that promote social support are being facilitated and it is a good idea to take advantage of this.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

People need other people. It's common for people to underestimate how much they might benefit from the support of people. Social support can help us cope with setbacks, solve problems, improve self-esteem and even manage health problems and stress. People who feel like they have the social support they need tend to have lower stress levels.

WHAT DOES SOCIAL SUPPORT LOOK LIKE?

People can offer many different kinds of support:

- Emotional support — someone you contact when you just need to talk about a problem and share your thoughts and feelings
- Knowledgeable advice — someone you talk to when you need more information.
- New perspectives — someone you call when you need to look at a problem from different points of view
- Practical help — someone you can call when your childcare provider calls in sick, someone who drops off a meal when you are sick, or someone who can help with your workload.

HOW CAN I BUILD MY OWN SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS?

Building existing networks:



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- Connect with your networks and ask for help. Remember that reaching out takes strength!
- Take care of important relationships you already have. You need to contribute to relationships, too—you can't only ask for help or assistance. Offer support to others in your networks.
- Be clear about the kind of help you need. Tell people what you need—they may be able to offer better help when they know what you're looking for.
- Seek specialized support, like counselling, when it's needed. Make sure that you're asking for help in the right places.

Building new networks:

- Make opportunities to meet new people. Join social activities, take classes or courses, volunteer, or get involved in an organization or group. You can also ask friends to introduce you to other people.
- Give relationships time. It takes a bit of work to build relationships. You won't be friends with everyone you meet, and when you do make a new friend, it will take time to strengthen your relationship.
- Reach out in person. If you're dealing with a specific problem like an illness, join a support group or try one-on-one peer support. A support group or peer support worker can be a great way to connect with others who can understand some of your experiences and can share hope, good information, and resources.
- Look online. If you don't have a lot of opportunities to find people in person, consider looking online for a community to join. (Just use your good judgement to choose options that are safe and helpful.)

DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

Contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to learn more about support and resources in your area.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca