

Week 23 HANDOUT D

HOW TO DEVELOP A HEALTHY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Many women have reported that developing outside interests was important in feeling better about themselves, seeing things that were happening more clearly, and having a wider support system.

Remember, you are the best expert on your situation, and you are the only one who can determine whether any of these activities are a good fit for you.

- **Identify all of support resources that you currently have available to you?**
- **How many of these people have you already turned to for support?**
- **What have you found beneficial in their responses?**
- **What have you found to be not helpful?**

Social support is an important factor in developing and maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviors. For example, family and friends can help you stay physically active by exercising with you or by encouraging you to be physically active. Friends and family can cook healthy meals together and encourage each other to make healthy food choices.

Making friendships and maintaining family ties is easier for some people than for others.

But even if you're not an outgoing person, you need social support. If your support system is in need of a little strengthening, try these suggestions:

- **Accept invitations to events, even if it feels awkward and difficult at first.**
- **Don't wait to be invited somewhere. Take the initiative and call someone.**
- **Set aside past differences and approach your relationships with a clean slate.**
- **Strike up a conversation with the person next to you in a class or at a local gathering. You could be introducing yourself to a new friend.**
- **Talk about things that interest other people. Be an alert listener.**
- **Find people who also have an interest in developing healthy lifestyle behaviors and get involved in activities with them.**

IDEAS FOR BUILDING YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

- **Get out with your pet.** Seek out a dog park or make conversation with those who stop to talk.
- **Work out.** Join a class through a local gym, senior center or community fitness facility. Or start a lunchtime walking group at work.
- **Do lunch.** Invite an acquaintance to join you for breakfast, lunch or dinner.
- **Volunteer.** Hospitals, places of worship, museums, community centers and other organizations often need volunteers. You can form strong connections when you work with people who share a mutual interest.
- **Join a cause.** Get together with a group of people working toward a goal you believe in, such as an election or the cleanup of a natural area.
- **Join a hobby group.** Find a nearby group with similar interests in such things as auto racing, music, gardening, books or crafts.
- **Go back to school.** Take a college or community education course to meet people with similar interests.
- **Get involved in a church.**
- **Join a meditation group.**
- **Join a yoga class.**
- **Join a hiking group.**

Stepping out and trying something new can be uncomfortable and sometimes frightening. Start with something you already enjoy doing and go from there. Have courage, your confidence will build with each small step.

<http://www.k-state.edu/paccats/Contents/Stress/Develop%20support%20system.pdf>

<http://www.eriecounty.oh.gov/departments-and-agencies/social-resources/victim-assistance/domestic-violence/education-about-domestic-violence/strategies-for-dealing-with-domestic-violence/developing-your-support-system/>