Supportive Relationships

Creating a Social Support System

Stumbling blocks and obstacles are bound to come up in life. If you find you have no one to talk to when you’re facing a challenge, it may be time to create a personal network of friends, colleagues and peers known as a social support system. A social support system is important to maintaining your emotional well-being and enhancing your quality of life.

Meeting new people can be difficult, especially if you’re quiet and shy. Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- **Take up a hobby.** Adult education classes are a great way to meet people with interests similar to yours.
- **Join a health club.** Exercise has numerous benefits, and can be a good way to meet people in a relaxed environment.
- **Play team sports.** Joining an athletic league can place you in a team environment where communication is necessary for success. It’s a wonderful way to get to know people and develop friendships.
- **Socialize with other co-workers.** If you get along well with co-workers, pick one day a week or month to get together with them and their friends for dinner or a movie.
- **Donate time to a community activity.** Community organizations are always looking for volunteers. You can meet other people and give back to the community at the same time.

During the second quarter of 2012, we are focusing on a theme of Supportive Relationships. This month we take an in-depth look at relationships with friends and others.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your relationships? You can visit www.Here4TN.com for ideas, tools and resources—24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Or you may call 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486) to speak confidentially with a caring professional who can provide you with practical, solutions-focused resources.

If you haven’t already, be sure to check out our new video. It will remind you of all the resources you can find through the ParTNers EAP. This short video is posted on the home page at www.Here4TN.com.
Helping a Bereaved Friend

You have a good friend who has just experienced the death of a loved one. Perhaps you know instinctively what to do, but maybe you do not. You may have never lost a person you love or you haven't even been to a funeral. This is not unusual. Here are some ideas for how you can support your friend:

Think about how much time you can give. Determine how much time you can give to being with your friend without creating problems in your own family. Visits over a longer period of time are more important than many visits during the first week, when other friends and relatives are still available.

Be a good listener. It is easy to do all of the talking, especially if you are anxious. Try not to fill every pause with chatter unless you have something important to say. Listening is the most important gift you can offer a grieving person.

Encourage your friend to talk. Every time your bereaved friend talks about the loss, the reality of what has happened will sink in. The loss must become real in order for your friend to move through the process of grief.

Watch the children and their emotional needs. Grief is so encompassing that children may be forgotten or ignored. See to their needs.

Share memories. Sharing memories contributes to the healing process. Bereaved people love to hear stories about their loved ones.

Watch for depression. It is normal for bereaved people to experience some depression, and reminiscing usually helps break it up. However, if you feel concerned about the degree of depression your friend may be exhibiting, suggest seeking professional help.

Identify local resources. Find resources for your friend such as books or support groups that specialize in grief.

Take care of yourself. Helping the bereaved is hard work. Don’t forget to take care of yourself. Your friend will need you for a long time.

In the First Days Following a Death

There is so much to do after a death, but your friend will need ordinary, practical help first.

- Make sure your friend’s house is presentable. Keep track of food and other gifts for thank-you notes.
- Help your friend organize his or her day. People tend to feel overwhelmed when a loved has died because there is so much to do. Help prioritize urgent tasks and those that can wait until later.
- Run errands. There are usually dozens of errands that need to be done. Ask for a list or help prepare one.
- Pick up out-of-town friends and relatives. Offer to make trips to the airport or bus station to pick up those who are arriving to attend the funeral. Help find convenient and affordable lodging.
- Help with funeral arrangements. Help your friend make the funeral service more personal by incorporating the deceased’s personality into a celebration of that person’s life.
- Encourage your friend to take time out to rest. Grief is exhausting, but if your bereaved friend is running on adrenaline, he or she may not be aware of the body’s need to take a break.
Bouncing Back with Resiliency

When faced with the same challenges, why do some people get overwhelmed while others maintain their positive attitude? Why are some people resistant to change, while others accept it? Why do some people continue to dwell on frustrations, while others learn what they can from the situation and move on?

The answers may be found in the level of resiliency we possess – our ability to bounce back and adjust to hurdles that life puts in our way.

**Resilient people …**

*Don't sweat the small stuff.* They don't get worked up over little things. They maintain a good attitude despite the usual daily frustrations.

*Perform well under pressure when hit with the "big stuff.* Resilient people don't come unglued in difficult situations. They don't become angry or rude.

*Bounce back from setbacks.* This is what most people think of when they hear the term resiliency. The more resilient a person is, the more quickly they're able to recover from a setback, make the best of the new situation and become a better, stronger person because of it.

*Adapt when change occurs.* Rather than hang on to old, outdated ways, resilient people respond to change with confidence and flexibility.

*Resiliency can be learned.* Here are some ways you can start building your own personal resiliency:

- Practice having a positive attitude. The challenge is to find positive ways of thinking that will help you be more resilient in trying situations.
- Build great relationships. It is amazing how much stress people can handle when they have good relationships.
- Take advantage of your inner personal strengths. Such strengths might include your hope, determination, creativity, willingness to take action or problem-solving abilities. The more you are aware of your strengths, the more you can draw upon them to get through a tough situation.
- Do more of what you love to do. This helps you to feel more satisfied in your life and less affected by those responsibilities you do not especially enjoy.

The ability to manage stress effectively is an important aspect of resiliency. Learn about practical stress management techniques at a special interactive training session in July. See the information about “Relaxation Techniques for Mind – Body Wellness” on page 4. Then register today so you won't miss this opportunity!

www.Here4TN.com | 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)
"Relaxation Techniques for Mind – Body Wellness"

JULY TRAINING SCHEDULE

Your ParTNers for Health Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs have teamed up to present a special, interactive training to help you de-stress! Join us to hear about relaxation techniques for the mind and exercises and stretches for your body.

This informative session will describe how our mind and body interact and the importance of keeping ourselves in a relatively calm state in order to lower our stress level. Practical stress management techniques will be demonstrated and practiced throughout the workshop.

Registration for the in-person training is simple. Just go online at www.tn.gov/finance/ins/eap.html

All classes are scheduled for 10 to 11:30 a.m. local time

July 17 in Johnson City
ETSU D.P. Culp Center
JL Seehorn Jr. Dr.
Meeting Room Number 6, 3rd Floor

July 18 in Nashville
WR Snodgrass TN Tower
312 Rosa Parks Ave.
Multimedia Room, 3rd Floor

July 19 in Jackson
Lowell Thomas State Office Building
225 Martin L. King Blvd.
Video Conference Room 1, Tower B

July 20 in Memphis
State Office Building
170 Mid-America Mall
Conference Room, 2nd Floor

July 21 in Nashville
Metro Center, Labor & Workforce Development
220 French Landing Dr.
Conference Room

July 25 in Nashville
Regional Health Office
1522 Cherokee Trail
Room 234

July 26 in Cookeville
TN Tech, Roaden University Center
1000 N. Dixie Avenue
Room 342

Not enough time to travel to an in-person training?

Join us for a no-cost webinar on “Relaxation Techniques for Mind – Body Wellness” on Thursday, July 19, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Central time.

This one-hour webinar will help you learn how to better manage your stress. Click here to register for the webinar.

Visit www.Here4TN.com now!