

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SUPPORTS AND BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

LESSON 11

Reflection

"Nothing is nicer than having someone who... appreciates you in the smallest things... accepts you in times of hardships. Comforts you when you are troubled. Social support is Everything."

- Anonymous

BRITE IDEAS

- Building a strong social support network is one of the most important steps a person can take to build **resilience**.
- Unfortunately, some forms of trauma such as childhood sexual abuse, emotional and physical abuse, neglect and growing up in a highly troubled family may harm a person's trust in other people.
- Loss of trust in others may lead to avoiding close relationships or forming harmful relationships with others.
- Traumatic experiences in childhood associated with neglect, abuse, or conflict may set the stage for difficult future relationships.
- Mental health and/or substance use problems related to trauma may put a strain on relationships.
- A person who has experienced sexual abuse or rape may have difficulty establishing intimate relationships with a partner.
- Trauma experiences may also contribute to strained marriages or disruption of family life.

Sometimes, a traumatic life event involving harm caused by others may contribute to a person being cautious about developing friendships or feeling unworthy of friendship.

The **GOOD NEWS** is that people who have experienced trauma related relationship difficulties can use the knowledge gained in the BRITE program to begin taking steps to establish healthy relationships.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AND STRENGTHEN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

Supportive relationships play an important role in building a person's confidence to manage life difficulties. Having a social network is one of the most important aspects of building personal resilience.

LET'S DISCUSS:

- ◆ Why might it be difficult for people who have experienced trauma to establish relationships that work for them? How can people strengthen their relationships with others?

LET'S GET PERSONAL: Improving and strengthening my social supports.

In this worksheet, you have the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and areas you may want to improve that involves social supports.

MY SOCIAL SUPPORTS	This is true for me	I want to improve this
I have friends I can rely on		
I have people I can talk to when I'm feeling down		
I can have honest conversations with people close to me		
I have people in my life to share recreational interests (e.g., movies, sports, museums, music, dance etc.)		
I am able to make new friends		
I can make small talk with people I don't know		
I feel comfortable starting conversations in social situations		
I belong to a community club/organization (YMCA, cultural groups, social clubs, advocacy organizations, sport teams or other organizations, etc.)		
I belong to a religious community that helps me during difficult times		
I'm in an intimate relationship that is satisfying and healthy		
I have a good relationship with one or more family members		
I get into arguments much too easily with people		
I'm uncomfortable with casual physical contact (being touched by people I don't know, being hugged, etc.)		
I'm uncomfortable with close or intimate physical contact (sexual activity, medical exams, etc.)		
I attend family events (e.g., holidays, celebrations, birthdays, outings, vacations)		
I get along with my peers, co-workers and/or fellow students		
I'm often uncomfortable in social situations, even if I know some of the people		
I feel lonely much of the time		
Many social activities stress me out		

The idea of dating really stresses me out		
Add your own area of relationships that concern you:		

LET'S TAKE ACTION!

Consider taking one or more Action Steps to support your personal progress in areas that are important to you. The following action steps give you the opportunity to learn more about the topic, apply what you have learned, or take steps towards goals that are important to you. You may choose to use the outline below to keep track of your Action Step. Choosing to take an Action Step is completely up to you.

A. I plan to take the following Action Steps - Check all that apply.

- Re-reading the lesson on my own or with others
- Gather more information on the topic (internet, library, healthcare professional)
- Discussing this topic with my counselor/therapist/doctor
- Discussing this topic with a another group member/peer/friend/family member
- Write down my thoughts and feelings about this topic in a diary or journal

B. Apply what I learned from the 'Let's Get Personal' Worksheet:

- I want to improve: _____
 - o My first step is to: _____
 - o When _____ Where _____ With whom _____

C. This topic motivated me to work on one of my important life goals:

- My goal: _____
 - o My first step is to: _____

Affirmation

I am a lovable and capable person. I have what it takes to form close relationships built on trust and respect. I have much to offer friends, family and other people I know. I have the knowledge and ability to expand my social connections now and in the future.

