

Getting Social Support in Six Steps*

1. Ask: “Who are my most important social connections right now?”

2. Think: “What Do I Want?”

- Decide what you really want or need from your social connections. For example, sometimes you want to be understood and sometimes you want advice. Approach this in two ways:
 1. **Look Outside Yourself.** What kind of problem am I facing? What kind of support will help me cope? Do I have to make an important decision (and need some good advice)? Do I need someone to help me do something? Do I need something from someone?
 2. **Look Inside Yourself.** What am I feeling inside? What kind of support will help me cope? Do I want someone to listen to me and understand what I’m going through? Do I want someone to hug or hold me? Do I want encouragement in handling a difficult situation? Do I want someone to help me get my mind off my problems?

3. Choose: “Whom Should I Ask?”

- Who would be a good source for what I want? In the past, who has given me this type of support? On whom can I depend for this type of support? With whom should I spend time?

4. Plan: “When Is the Right Time? Where Is the Right Place?”

- You’ll be talking about something that matters to you, so you want the person to have enough time to listen. Ask what would be the best time, and let him/her know that you were hoping for at least one hour. Make sure your meeting place is comfortable, safe, and has privacy.

5. Request: With an “I”-Message.

- Once you have decided on the type of support you want and whom you’ll ask, and have found a good time to talk, use an “I”-message to talk about how you’re feeling, your situation, and what the person listening to you can do to help. For example, you might say, “I’m really angry (upset, frustrated, sad) about what happened in school today, and wonder if we could talk about it.”

6. Thank the Person.

- End the conversation by thanking the person for listening or for his/her help. Name exactly what he/she did that you appreciated, so in the future he/she will know how to help you.