



Building Support Systems

A social support system is a network of individuals, groups, and community members who are available to help in times of need. Having a strong support system makes us more [resilient⁶](#), which means we are able to bounce back from life's difficulties and disappointments more quickly and easily.

Without strong support systems, we can feel isolated. At the physical level, social isolation (the absence of interaction with others) has been linked to negative health outcomes like increased blood pressure and atherosclerosis. Likewise, the lack of adequate social support has been [compared⁷](#) to negative health consequences similar to obesity, cigarette smoking, and insufficient physical activity.

Here are a few ways to build and strengthen your support systems:

Expand your circle

Expand your social circle by seeking out new friendships. Whether you ask someone in your network to make an introduction or choose to attend a community event outside your familiar network, surrounding yourself with strangers offers opportunities to build new relationships. If you are more introverted, and the idea of large groups of people makes you uncomfortable, focus on smaller group gatherings.

Host a gathering

Invite a group of friends, coworkers and family members to your home or local hangout. This creates an opportunity to deepen connections within your network, and it also encourages your network to expand their own connections as well.

Reciprocate

Strong relationships are not one-sided; they require energy inputs from both sides. Make an effort to reciprocate past gestures of kindness by offering to help someone in your network with an upcoming project, or simply invite them to lunch.



6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4780285/>

7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2921311/#B25>