



Innovative **LIFE** Options 

Support Network Development

An Innovative Approach

Support Networks

A different approach!

Support network development goes beyond simply bringing people to the table...

It is about intentionally building relationships!





What is a Support Network?

Support networks can be hard to define.

Instead of trying to create a definition, think about it through a lens of **values and relationships**:



Based in relationships

Diverse

Unique

Unpaid

Intentional

Organic



Why are Support Networks important?

Support Networks have shown to create the following positive outcomes in lives of people:



Expanded opportunities

Enhanced quality of life

Increased self-esteem and self-worth

Increased safety and security

Connectedness and belonging

Loneliness

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- David Pitonyak



There is no scientific method to developing support networks...

It is an intentional process of **nurturing** relationships.

There are three stages to support network development we believe to be key.





Exploration

First Stage



Where to start?

First, look at who is already there...

- Who does this person already know?
- Who cares about this person?
- Who does this person care about?
- Who shares common interests?
- Think about work, volunteer, family, activities, friends, neighborhood, other

What existing relationships could benefit from support and nurturing?



Looking beyond who is already there...

Develop a deeper understanding of who the person is.

- Ask deep and thought provoking questions.
- Talk to people who know the person from different parts of their life.
- Listen and learn about their past.
- Take the time to find out their aspirations.
- Learn what supports would best help them connect with others.



Identify sports, clubs, associations, groups, activities, volunteer, and work opportunities.

Where and when do we tend to make friendships?

School, work, volunteering, advocating, and church.

Why?

Relationships need common ground.

Relationships need frequency.

Relationships take time.



Development
Second Stage

What is network development at its core?

Nuturing depth of relationship between people.



Or simply...

Getting people to
care about one
another.

This is not easy work... but it is important work.

There is no step-by-step guide on how to nurture caring between people.

But after many years of doing this work, we have some of our learnings to share with you:



- The process and outcome should look different every time.
- Focus on developing relationships one person at a time.
- Find out what kind of support is necessary.
- Experiences shape how a person engages with others.
- Timing is important.
- Common interests do not equal immediate relationship success.
- Nurture the relationship, don't be the relationship.
- Put your energy into nurturing another relationship if needed.
- Keep at it.
- It will take time.



Sustainability

Third Stage





How do you create lasting and sustainable relationships?

Support

Staff members play a key role in the **on-going nurturing** of relationships. Proper supports and encouragement everyday is critical.

Listening

Intimacy and trust develops between friends when we **listen** with not only our **ears** but also with our **eyes** and our **hearts**.

Sharing

When the **timing** is right, **share** about your own **experiences**. Deeper connections emerge when we 'let people in' to what has shaped us.

Reciprocity

It is of utmost importance that we show we **care** and that relationships are **meaningful to us**. Depth develops when we make our fondness known through our actions.

Creating Memories

Do things together, **take pictures**, laugh, cry, and **share moments** that are fun or tough. Experiencing and reminiscing about these times will create lasting connections.

Gathering

Once caring has been nurtured, **bring people together**... space and opportunity for people to spend time together nurtures **new relationships**.



We don't have to be alike to have a relationship.
We just have to care about one another.

- Unknown



THANK YOU!

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