# Building your Support System

**Reasons to Build a Support System**

1. Goals are seldom accomplished without support.
2. Personal support systems can help us avoid burnout.
3. Personal support systems can help us achieve more than we ever imagined.

A support system is a resource pool drawn on selectively to support ***me*** in moving in a direction of ***my*** choice and which leaves me stronger.

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| ***Experience*** | ***Support Type*** | ***Outcome*** |
| Confusion | Role Models | Clarity |
| Isolation | Common Interest | Social Contacts |
| Stress | Relaxer | Renewed |
| In Crisis | Dependable | Supported |
| Low Self-Esteem | Respecter | Affirmed |
| Disconnection | Referral Agents | Connections |
| Plateau | Challengers | Cutting Edge |
| Uncertainty | Guides | Confidence |

Adapted from Dr. Charles Seashore

**Assessing your Support System**

***Instructions:*** On the following page are descriptors for some different types of personal support. Reflect on your personal goal. This goal may be broad (e.g. leadership development or break down organizational silos) or specific (e.g. get a promotion or resolve a sticky customer issue). Then assess your current support system.

Step 1: Think of your personal situation keeping in mind your personal goal(s).

Step 2: Read the descriptions, then in the spaces to the right, enter the names of the people in your life who provide you with that type of personal support. Think of work associates, friends, family, neighbors, mentors, teachers, etc.

Step 3: Assess your personal support system.

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| Goal: | |
| Types of Personal Support | Names |
| **Role Models**: People whom you admire, respect, see as competent and confident. People who serve as an example of you "would like to be like" in one or many respects. |  |
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| **Common Interest**: People who share your concerns because "they are in the same boat." People who strive for similar goals and with whom you share interest, experiences, and concerns. |  |
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| **Relaxers**: People or non-human supports (e.g. pets, music, hobbies, exercise) who help you relax. |  |
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| **Dependables**: Those who provide personal assistance and always seem to be willing to help when you have a need. People who can be relied upon in a crisis. |  |
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| **Respecters**: People who respect your competence and who understand the difficulty and value of your work. People whom you respect, that recognize your skills and give you self-worth. |  |
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| **Referral Agents**: People who open doors, put in a good word, and recommend the right people, to help you fulfill your needs. |  |
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| **Challengers**: People who challenge your basic assumptions and working principles, provide other perspectives and ask you things you haven't considered. People who stretch you, encourage you to move in new directions, and to continue to grow. |  |
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| **Guides**: People who have “been there, done that” and can provide you with advice and share their wisdom. People who boost your confidence to take your next steps to achieve your goals. |  |

**Questions:**

1. Review the names in your support system.
   1. Do you have a strong support system?
   2. Where are you missing support?
   3. Do you have one individual in three or more categories? Are you overly reliant on this person?
2. How can you build your support system to achieve your goal?
   1. Who are people you can engage in your support system?
   2. Can you use one part of your support system to strengthen another?
   3. Are you resisting support in an area? If so, why?
3. What are your next steps to acknowledging and building your support system to achieve your personal goal(s)?

**Non-Human Supports:**

# Animals, music, exercise, technology, books, nature, and hobbies can be an important part of your support system. Keep them in mind as you assess what you have and what is missing.

**Source: Charles Seashore, *Edith Whitfield Seashore & Michael Broom, Ph.D. 2007***