

SUPPORT'S SIGNIFICANCE—Kori L. Propst, MS, LPC

As you think about the changes you have made in your health status over the past few months or years, the habits you've revamped to fit a lifestyle of wellness, or the goals you are setting currently to maximize energy and fitness, have you determined what you will need in the way of support?

Support is one area which many of us forget to focus on when considering what will help us reach or maintain success. We may think we can achieve our goals on our own or continue on our journeys without the help of others. It is entirely possible that you have, without the aid of friends, family, or another type of support system, made lasting improvements in your lifestyle. But think about how much easier it would be if you had someone cheering you on, congratulating you on small achievements, or just being there to listen to you when you're frustrated!

When I'm working with others to develop goals, one of my first questions is "**What does your support system look like?**" Often a difficult question to answer, my clients are forced then to ponder who or what in their lives they've been able to rely on.

Support can come in many forms. Often it is our **family members or friends** who come to mind first. Mom may be the support person whom we know we can bounce ideas off of and complain to when the going gets tough and not have to endure any sort of criticism. Sister Jan may be the go-to person for ideas or advice when we just can't figure something out. Your best friend Sue may be the person you can borrow money from without feeling obligated to her for life and guilty for having asked.

Animals can be a part of our support system also, however. Mr. Wiggles provides unconditional love when we've felt a loss or are just frustrated after a long day and need to feel nurtured. And he's always there waiting for a long walk or jog when we need to burn off some pent up energy.

Many individuals find significant support in **group settings**. Weight Watchers members can utilize the meetings that are offered to get support from fellow weight loss participants. This support may come in the form of accountability, with check-ins to make sure you're eating appropriately and making the efforts necessary to meet your weight loss goals, or it could be a time to talk about struggles and generate ideas to overcome them.

Online support groups exist for similar reasons but provide anonymity and privacy. Some find it easier to divulge personal information when others do not know who they are but are still able to receive feedback to stay on track with their goals. Finally, support may be in the form of **nature, meditation, or deep breathing**. Depending on the situation, your support needs will vary.

People/Places Activities	Contact Information	Support They Provide	How I Can Ask for What I Need	What I Can Do in Return

Once we've determined who or what may provide support and have developed goals to begin working on, the next question to consider is **"What do you anticipate will be your struggles in meeting this goal?"** Go through each goal separately and brainstorm everything or everyone that may get in the way of your success and how. Nothing should be considered trivial. Consider previous experiences, look at past successes and/or mistakes, and remain objective. This is a time to be honest and non-judgmental. If you have determined that the same thing keeps happening repeatedly, now is the time to make an honest effort to analyze the circumstances behind that outcome! Use the format below as a guide:

Think about what has gotten in the way of your success in the past, what is getting in the way currently, and what you anticipate might get in the way.

Struggle:

Trigger:

<i>Accompanying Thought</i>	<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
------------------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Next, identify who/what you can access when one of these struggles rears its head AND how you are going to ask for what you need.

I often get very detailed with my clients when we are working on developing their supports. We look outside of their normal social circle. It becomes a lesson not only in who can provide what and in certain situations, but also in developing the confidence to be able to ask for what one needs. We've become a society that prides itself on self-sufficiency, but what about being able to reach out and share, not only when we're faltering, but also when we've triumphed!