

Influence...

MY PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

Definition

Perceived social support refers to the feeling of being surrounded by people we can ask for help from in various situations, whether it be friends, colleagues, family members, or even professionals. Social support is divided into two big categories, on one hand social support based on our perception of the person's availability (and often times we put ourselves in their shoes and think that they aren't available before even asking), and on the other hand, social support based on our perception of the person's legitimacy (skills), i.e. their ability to support us in a given situation.

In fact, we could feel surrounded by many people without really thinking that these people could actually help us with a certain decision or action. Often, we don't really think about this and we usually turn to the same people systematically without really asking ourselves if they're the right people to help and support us in a particular situation.

There exists 4 types of social support; each contributing to our capacity to act differently:

Emotional social support, which refers to the feeling of being heard, to showing/experiencing empathy, and to receiving affection.

Instrumental social support, which includes receiving tangible assistance, such as material or monetary assistance.

Evaluative social support, which describes the encouragements and compliments that build self-confidence and the motivation to overcome obstacles.

Informational social support, which refers to the advice and recommendations that we receive from close ones.

My Perceived Social Support



Social support is a great lever for the capacity to act. Its effect is even stronger when **the stress perceived** by the individual is **very invalidating** to their capacities, since social support promotes the expression and sharing of emotions, develops the feeling of belonging to one or multiple groups and satisfies the human need for psychological safety.

How to perceive social support and use it?

Developing trust in one's relations:

Learning to trust and believe that others are able to help us requires us to realize what we think of others in the first place. For example, when we complete a task instead of a colleague because we think we can do it better and faster, or because we think it will reduce a load on them, we are decreasing our perception of social support.

Just like any other perception, it is not reality itself but an interpretation of reality. We should then keep in mind that the beliefs that come from our life experiences influence the way we perceive reality. Then, we can practice some cognitive reframing exercises to challenge our perceptions.

→ Card : Influence... my perceived stress

You could:

- o Look for people who share the same problem through support groups, groups on social media, or even close ones who seem to be going through the same thing.
- o Identify people around you who seem relevant in terms of their capacity to help you make the right efforts to help you reach your goals, in order to build a relationship with that person and provide each other with mutual support (beware of one-way relationships!)



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Learn to ask for help:

Asking for help is not a weakness, on the contrary it is even a necessity that we should not give up for reasons relating to pride or a fear of bothering others. Most of us have learned to be loving, cooperative, autonomous, and to not annoy others. Situations that enforce autonomy, such as the workplace, teach us to manage everything on our own, to be able to take on any challenge, to improve our skills on our own... But here lies the other side of the coin: we lose our perception of social support.

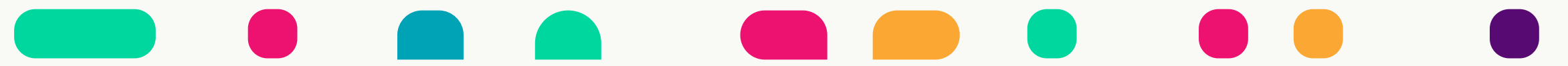


You could:

- Train yourself to accept the fact that you need help in a particular situation by thinking about the benefits of others' help in terms of effectiveness and mental load.
- Be okay with rejecting others and receiving rejections. When someone refuses to help you, it is not to reject you, it just means that the person isn't able to help with that particular task at that particular time. We should trivialize asking for help and refusing help to make such a request more accessible and less guilt-inducing.
- Be straightforward with your request for help, without beating around the bush. The person you're asking help from needs to get a clear and honest message to feel useful and of help to you
- Avoid awkward and clumsy sentence phrasings like "i expect you to..." or "you need to get this done by 2 PM". Remember the principles of nonviolent communication and do not overdo justifications. The ins and outs of the reasons why you are not able to do a task on your own reflect the feeling that your request is not entirely legitimate, hence the need to justify it.
- Practice the art of thanking and feedback! It is a mark of recognition that encourages prosocial behavior and altruistic behavior, and it boosts the other person's self-efficacy. (see Self-Efficacy file)



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Offer your support to your close ones:

Building a network of support comes down to providing support to others too so there'll be a two-way exchange, a mutual relationship that benefits both parties. When we feel support, we are more likely to give support in return. So, you could be the first to start this loop of support and to benefit from it afterwards!

You could:

- Pay attention to your close ones' experiences and suggest moments of sharing to offer a listening ear, advice, or help if needed.
- Plan hours of availability for your peers and close ones.

