

Lesson 5

Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever

Beginning

- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today's lesson is "Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever". What do you know about the importance of social support generally and especially during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we're going to talk about social support, why it is important – especially now, steps you can take to make sure that you have the social support that you want. Let's begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

What is social support?

- "Social support" refers to having relationships that are rewarding, enriching and helpful. Relationships can be considered "supportive" when both people trust and respect each other. Having social support means that you feel connected and cared for by other people.
- Sometimes even very caring relationships have problems. Differences in opinions are natural in any relationship. A supportive relationship can involve disagreements from time to time. In supportive relationships, disagreements are handled respectfully and can usually be resolved.
- Social support can come from relationships with a variety of different people, including family members, friends, peers, spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, co-workers, members of religious or other spiritual groups, classmates, mental health practitioners, members of peer support groups, roommates and neighbors.

Why is social support important?

- Social relationships are an important part of people's lives. For many people, the quality of their relationships is a major factor in their happiness. Supportive relationships make people feel good about themselves and more hopeful about the future. Having supportive relationships can also help people reduce stress.
- Social relationships play a very important role in recovery. People with mental health problems who have made big improvements in their lives often point to the importance of social support. Below is a list of some reasons they have given:
 - Social support provides a safe way to vent feelings.
 - People can help you figure out what is real and what is not.

- People can help with day-to-day needs and problems such as money, housing and transportation.
- People can offer comfort and reassurance during tough times.
- Other people can help you watch out for signs of relapse.
- You can talk over problems and get advice from other people.
- Being with other people is one way of getting to know yourself better.
- “Belonging” to a social group is a basic human need.

Why is being connected with other people more important now than ever?

Now that we are all practicing social and physical distancing, we don't see others in person as often as in the past and many of us miss the personal contact. These are anxious times that leave some of us stressed out, sad and even scared. Having regular contact with friends, peers, family, counselors, therapists, doctors and case managers can help us to feel better about ourselves and our situations. Seeing each other in person is being replaced by phone calls and online meetings.

How can we stay connected with other people now?

Technology helps! Telephone calls, face-time and skype, online experiences such as zoom, and other social media can help us all stay connected. It's important to identify the people that you want to connect with and how to do it. Some people may be reaching out to you. For others, you may need to reach out to them.

Let's Get Personal

Who are you currently in touch with? Please list:

Who are you not currently in touch with but would like to reach out to?

Action Step

Select one or more people that you are you not currently in touch with but would like to reach out to.

Who? _____

What will be your first step? _____

When? _____

Where? _____

How will you remind yourself to do it? _____

Who could help you complete your Action Step? _____

What might get in the way of completing your Action Step and how can you deal with this?

Ending

- What were the main points of this lesson?
- How do you feel about what we have covered today?
- Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to understand the importance of connecting with other people. I will use this knowledge to connect with others in a way that works for me. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have relationships with others that helps me stay safe and healthy!