



TAKE CONTROL

for Your Future

A little help from your friends: Finding strength in your community

In the event of economic stress or hardship, it is a good time to step back and take stock of your many resources. These resources may be personal, that is, something within you, or from your family and community. Below are ideas for identifying and making the most of these sources of strength and support for getting by when times are tough.

Identifying personal resources

When loss is experienced, you may underestimate the wealth of your personal resources. When evaluating personal resources, money may be the first thing you consider. Financial resources, however, are only one of many personal resources, and often are not the most important for successfully navigating life's challenges.

Everyone has varying amounts of personal resources:

Financial — Access to money

Social and Emotional Skills — The ability to cope with and be resilient to stressors and navigate social relationships

Mental and Physical — Your health and ability to read, write and compute

Spiritual — Your connection with things of a spiritual nature

Community Connections and Knowledge — Knowing how to navigate your community and access help and community resources

Identifying family and community resources

Many times it is your personal resources that help you to relate to others and develop potentially powerful support systems. The most helpful resources for handling stress may be your community of family, friends and neigh-

bors. When you feel stressed it becomes most important to reach out to those around you and offer and receive support from others. Your community network can provide many important resources: a listening ear, yard maintenance, meal preparation, childcare, transportation, help with household chores, or assistance with decision making and logistics. Say "yes" when someone asks if they can help. Be specific, tell people what would be helpful to you. People will want to provide the help you really need.

Ways to increase your level of social support

The culture tends to put a strong emphasis on the ability to "go it alone." While this independence is valuable, it often comes at a large personal cost. Instead of completely going it alone, strong community networks can be a powerful asset in your life. Some people are born into strong community networks, and they never lose them. Others have found a need to repeatedly redevelop the strength of community networks due to losses of key relationships through life changes such as moving, death, divorce, etc. Rather than being a sign of weakness, relying on others who care for you and whom you also help is a source of great strength.

Ideas for getting started

Get involved — Give of your time and talents and be a part of what is happening in your community.

Meet new people — Join a group or organization in which you share a common interest. As you become a part of people's lives, they will become a part of yours.

Develop trust — As you develop new relationships, some may grow in trust and respect. Foster openness in your relationships.

Practice give and take — Having reciprocal relationships allows one to give from their areas of strength and ability and rely on others to give from their strengths.

Recognize your own strength — It's so easy to focus on our loss when we are stressed, but looking outward to others in our community may offer a helpful perspective.

Identifying Community Resources

Many sources of support are located in the communities in which we live. Often, support from these sources is available at no cost and is made available as a part of the mission of the organization. Some sources of community-based support are:

- Churches, mosques, synagogues or other communities of faith
- Local book clubs, playgroups, sports teams, recreation clubs, gardening clubs or other voluntary groups
- Government or community-based agencies
- Non-profit organizations or charitable groups
- Neighbors and neighborhood associations
- Library or recreation programs
- Health care providers

In weathering hard times, it is important to know that you are not alone. There are many others who have either been through it before, are going through it now, or are eager to help.

For more information on the Web, go to:

www.nctakecontrol.com

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