

Help from others; “buddy system”



Help from your friends

Support and help from others is the most frequently used process for pursuing goals and progressing toward your vision of well-being. Sources of help could include one or more among the following: your spouse, a family member, a friend or co-worker, your employer, a professional coach or counselor, the clergy or someone else you trust. The table on this page outlines some of the ways that others can help during the various stages of change.

Help from others and stages of change

If you are:	How others may help:
Stage 1: Resisting change; not thinking about change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be aware of problems before you are • Provide information to make you aware of options and benefits • Listen when you need to talk
Stage 2: Thinking about change but not taking any steps to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide warmth/caring without imposing conditions (“no strings attached”) • Show genuine acceptance • Assist with increasing awareness and motivating yourself to get started • Identify “pros” (benefits) • Serve as an appropriate role model
Stage 3: Preparing/planning to change, which may include trying out a new behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what you want and what you don’t want • Show patience and tolerance during difficult times • Provide resources • Reduce “cons” (barriers) • Respect your boundaries (rules or limits of behavior)
Stage 4: Actively implementing the plan for change on a regular basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign your written contract and keep their commitment to help you • Participate with you in an activity • Rearrange surroundings to support your goal • Serve as an accountability partner to help monitor your progress • Encourage you to keep trying • Challenge you to do your best • Provide or share a reward • Provide verbal praise
Stage 5: Maintaining a new behavior for the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be available to call in case of a crisis • Serve as an accountability partner to help monitor your adherence • Roleplay to practice confronting temptations

“Buddy up”

There are times when two or more people working as a team can make changes easier than either could working alone. This kind of helping relationship is most important when you are starting to practice new habits or skills.

Think of your helper as an accountability partner – to hold you accountable for the actions you have committed to take and provide positive feedback. Accountability isn't pestering or nagging. Rather it is a welcomed conversation between you and your partner that reviews your progress toward and adherence to a goal. Remember, you are accountable only to yourself and to your goal, not to your helper.

Activity: Who will be your helpers?¹

Who?	What type(s) of support do you want?	How will you ask for support?

While it is good to have more than one source of help or support in case someone is not available, most people say that the quality of support is more important than the quantity of support.

Tips: Communicating effectively with helpers

- Don't expect your helper to know what you are thinking and feeling.
- Speak for yourself using statements such as “I think...” or “I feel...”
- Express your desires, preferences, feelings and needs clearly and directly.
- Establish boundaries or limits and let others know the consequences of passing those limits.
- Share your best experiences while acknowledging challenges and accepting responsibility for your behaviors.
- Explain what you like about your goal or action plan.
- Keep the conversation focused on the future, not on the past.

Other sources of support

If family or friends are not able to provide the support you need or want, look for a local group that shares your values and goals. Formal groups are organized to support volunteerism, religious/spiritual needs, culture, recreation, health promotion and other interests. People in these groups can provide resources and guidance and remind you of the benefits of the vision you are pursuing. They can also share their experience, strength and hope with you.

Your employer may also provide resources and support, such as employee assistance programs (EAP), worksite wellness programs and a range of employee benefits for physical, mental, social and financial well-being. Take full advantage of these valuable resources and benefits.



Encouragement:

When you've been successful in achieving a goal and maintaining a new habit for a while, you might want to consider serving as a "buddy" or helper to another person who is just getting started with change. You are likely to benefit as much or more than the person you are helping.

Sources:

1. INTERVENT International. Lifestyle management program: Getting the support you need, 2020.

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