

4-H Grab and Go: My Support System

Concept:

Social networks have an influence on the decision-making process.

Age/Grade Level:

Middle school: Ages 12-15

Education Standard:

National Health Education Standard 4: Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Life Skill:

Communication, Social Skills

Success Indicator:

Youth will utilize a social support network to provide emotional and informational assistance when faced with risky situations.

National 4-H Curriculum:

**Health
Rocks!**

4-H ■ HEALTHY LIFE SERIES

PREPARATION

Time: 30 – 45 minutes

Space: Large open classroom

Materials:**Activity One**

- Masking tape or string/yarn (2 pieces each 7-10 ft. long)
- 3 large metal or rubber rings (3 inches in diameter) or 3 metal rings from wide mouth canning jars per team
- Pencils/pens

Activity Two

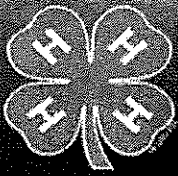
- Chalkboard/chalk or Flipchart/markers
- Plain paper
- Markers/crayons
- *Other/On Own* sign

Background Information:

Having a social support network is a positive way for youth to gain information and emotional assistance when faced with a critical decision. Social support networks are made up of friends, family, peers, and others who may have special knowledge or offer special help. These support networks need to be cultivated and encouraged. When youth are faced with a situation that deals with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, they will then have their network readily available to help them when making a decision. Their social support network will help them gain information, check their ideas for accuracy, build self-esteem, and give them a sense of security.

Instructions:**Activity One**

1. Divide into teams of three to five participants. Place parallel lines of masking tape or string/yarn on the floor five to six feet apart.
2. Give each team three rings, a pencil, and a sheet of paper. One team member stands with the pencil on one line with one end of the pencil on the floor. The other team members get behind the other line. Each team member takes a turn tossing the three rings and seeing how many they can get over the pencil. The pencil is not to be moved. Someone needs to record the number of rings they get on the pencil.
3. Have them repeat the activity. This time the pencil holder, staying behind the line, can move the pencil after the ring is tossed, in an effort to get more rings on the pencil. Record the number of rings they got on the pencil. Compare the score from the first time to the second time. Make sure each member (even the pencil holder) has a chance to toss the rings.
 - Which time was the easiest to get the ring on the pencil? Why?
 - How does this activity show you that having others to help or assist makes it easier to succeed?
 - How could you apply this in real life situations?
4. Share that having someone to talk with and support your decisions is not a sign of weakness but instead a sign of good judgment and maturity. It helps to check if you are doing the right thing.



My Support System

Youth Development Tip:

Keeping youth active and engaged increases learning.

Open Ended Questions:

- What qualities or characteristics do these persons/groups have that make you feel they are the right choice?
- What do you see as a benefit of having this person/group in your social support network?
- Are there any situations you can think of where there might be no one to go to? Why?
- Who do you think you might be a support system for?
- How might a support system help you avoid tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs?

Activity Two

1. Brainstorm a list of individuals or groups who might serve as a support system to provide you with emotional and informational help. Write the list on the chalkboard/flipchart. (Note: Encourage very specific groups. For example, instead of saying "parents", have them break that into "mom" or "dad". Other examples might include teacher, aunt, uncle, faith-based person, school counselor, 4-H leader, etc.)
2. From the list in Step 1 write each of the individuals or groups in large letters on the paper – only one per page. In addition to this list, have a sign that says *Other/On Own*. Place the signs around the room.
3. Explain that different situations will be read and you are to go to the support system/individual/group you think would provide the best help and advice. If you do not think any of those listed would work or you would go somewhere else, go to the *Other/On Own* sign.
4. Read the situations.
 - You are having problems with your girlfriend/boyfriend.
 - You are wondering what career path might be the best for you.
 - You have questions about drugs.
 - Some friends are using inhalants and you are worried.
 - Your grades in math are slipping.
 - You and your friends got caught drinking by a friend's parent.
 - You are wondering what to do this weekend.
 - You smoked a cigarette and thought it was fun.
 - Your best friend wants you to go to a party and drink with them.
5. Review the **Open Ended Questions**.

Additional Notes/Extension/Glossary

Social Support System - a network of family, friends, and peers who are there when you need them. It provides emotional and informational assistance in a safe, positive environment.

Learn More

The following website provides additional information:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/SR00033>