

Worksheet 6.1: Making the most of your family and friends network

Carers often arrive at the workshops feeling incredibly isolated. Many people may have offered support, but in their distressed state carers have felt too ashamed to accept this offer, and/or simply haven't known what to ask for. Friends and family can be a key part of the herd of elephants, particularly once Edi has been discharged from treatment and still has some way to go in their recovery journey.

Consider the following questions:

- What are the key characteristics of a good support person?
- Who is a good support person for me and why?
- What jobs can I give to people who are offering to help? Write a list.

At home complete Table 6.3.

In pairs or as a group think of specific people in your support network and write down what specifically it is about them that you find helpful. Are there any people in your close family/friends network who are unhelpful?

It can also be helpful for carers to categorise family and friends who:

- Can provide emotional support (good non-judgemental listeners)
- Can provide practical support (with other kids, food shopping, etc.)
- Can provide light relief (a night out, good company, etc.)
- Should be kept at arm's length and communicated with on a need-to-know basis (other relatives who always say the wrong thing).

Family and friends are a core part of the herd of elephants and will be ever-present long after Edi has been discharged from treatment, and is facing the challenges of the later stages of recovery and beyond.

If you are feeling really isolated and hopeless, book an appointment with your GP to discuss what help is available locally to help you start to build a support network around you.

Name of possible support person.....

Table 6.3 Identifying carer support network

	4	3	3	1	0
How easy is it to talk to this person about problems/challenges?	Very easy	Quite easy	Not sure	Quite difficult	Very difficult
Is the person open to new approaches/ understanding about the eating disorder?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Could you talk to this person even when it seems that progress was slower or going backwards?	Definitely	Probably	Maybe	Probably not	Definitely not
Can you trust this person to be there when you need someone? No strings attached? No moral blackmail?	Definitely	Probably	Maybe	Probably not	Definitely not
How often are you in contact with this person?	At least once a week	At least once every 2 weeks	Every 2 to 4 weeks	At least once a month	Less than once a month
How confident are you that you can engage a close other to support you?	Very confident	Quite confident	Not sure	Not very confident	Definitely not

Total points

16–20: You are in the lucky position of having a very good supporter near you. How will you equip the person with the necessary info and skills?

Under 16: Brainstorm ways you can engage support (sharing skills training materials, join or set up your own support group etc.).

If you are feeling really isolated and hopeless book an appointment with your GP to discuss what help is available locally to help you start to build a support network around you.