

GDC Session #7

Establishing a Support System

Objectives of Session

1. Identify the benefits of having a support system in addition to self-help programs to aid recovery from cocaine addiction.
2. Identify specific people and organizations to include in a support system.
3. Identify barriers to asking others for help and support.
4. Identify ways to ask for help and support.

Methods/Points for Group Discussion

1. Use a discussion format to review clients' answers to the handouts and the educational material for this session. Write the major points on a chalkboard or flip chart, if desired.
2. Ask group members to share their own experiences related to this material, as it is reviewed.
3. Mention the previous group session's focus on using self-help groups to aid recovery and state that other people and organizations can be part of the recovering individual's support system.
4. Discuss the need to replace old drug-using friends and drug-based activities with drug-free peers and family members. Acknowledge how difficult it can be to do this in early recovery. Ask group members who to avoid asking for support. Some of their answers may include:
 - Others who still get drunk or high and have no interest in supporting the addicted person's quest for recovery.
 - People who are angry at the recovering addicted person and may still be holding a grudge.
 - People who don't want the recovering addicted person to succeed at getting or staying sober or clean.
 - Other people?
5. Ask group members to give examples of people they might ask for help and support.

Answers may include:

 - Specific family members.
 - Specific friends.

- A boss or coworker.
 - A neighbor.
 - A priest, minister, or rabbi.
 - Other people?
6. Ask members of the group to give examples of organizations or groups that can play an important role in their efforts to stay sober and change their lifestyle. Answers may include:
- Church or synagogue.
 - Sports team.
 - Club that involves a specific interest.
 - Volunteer organizations.
7. Ask group members to give examples of how other people and organizations can play a role in their recovery. Examples may be:
- Other people can listen to their problems or concerns.
 - Other people can be asked for specific help with a problem or situation.
 - Other people can participate in mutually satisfying activities or events that do not revolve around alcohol or drug use (e.g., share a hobby, go to a movie together, etc.).
 - Organizations can give a sense of belonging.
 - Organizations can offer opportunities for social interaction, a chance to develop new friendships or interests, or a chance to learn new skills.
 - Church-related organizations can provide an opportunity for spiritual growth.
8. Ask the group to list some of the reasons why it is difficult to reach out and seek help or support from others. Some answers may include:
- Fear of rejection.
 - Feeling unworthy of being helped by others.
 - Don't know how to be assertive and make requests of other people.
 - Feeling shy and awkward.
 - Embarrassed to have to ask another for something.
 - Fear of sounding inadequate.
 - Trouble trusting others and opening up.
9. Discuss how to ask for help and support from others.

GDC Session #7 Handout

1. "My Social Support System." Adapted from *Group Drug Counseling Participant Recovery Workbook*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, Inc., pp. 15-17.

Suggested Education Videos

1. Living Sober Video F: *Building A Recovery Network and Sponsorship*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.
2. Living Sober Video R: *Compliance with Self-Help Programs*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.

GDC Session #7, Sample Handout #1

My Social Support System

A social support system consists of people in your life to whom you give and from whom you receive help, support, friendship, or companionship. Your support system helps you satisfy your needs. It usually includes family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and others with whom you come in contact. Members of AA, NA, CA, or other self-help groups should make up a very important part of your social support system.

Places such as the YMCA or YWCA, churches, clubs and sports teams, and community organizations can be part of your social support system. For example, a health club where you regularly work out, a bowling team or a softball team, or a neighborhood committee may make up part of your social network because belonging to one of these groups helps you feel connected to others and provides you with opportunities to have fun or to contribute something positive to your community.

People who have a strong social and family support system are more successful at staying off cocaine and other drugs than those who do not have a strong network. They also are more likely to get their emotional needs met and to feel satisfied with their lives. Lack of a social network can make an individual feel isolated, lonely, depressed, or dissatisfied with life. It can also be a factor in relapse to cocaine or other drug use.

Of course, social networks are for more than just getting your own needs met. Your network also provides you with plenty of opportunities to give to others or do things for them. You may be just as likely to provide help and support to a friend as this friend is to provide support to you.

The following questions will help you assess your current social support system.

1. What are the names of three people to whom I could turn to discuss a personal problem?

My sponsor, Don My therapist, Jeniece My friend, Tony

2. What are the names of three people to whom I could turn to ask for a small loan I needed for an emergency?

My dad Uncle Jack My friend, Marlene

3. What are the names of three people whom I could ask to help me with some task or job (e.g., moving furniture, painting, fixing my car, etc.)?

My brother, Dave My friend, Howard My cousin, Jim

4. What are the names of three people whom I could contact to share an activity, such as going to a movie, sporting event, picnic, restaurant, or for a walk?

Len, AA friend Matt, AA friend Fran, work friend

5. Whom do I rely on most for help and emotional support?

My wife My AA sponsor My therapist

6. How easy is it for you to ask for help? (circle your rating)

1 Very Easy	3 Somewhat Easy	5 Somewhat Difficult	7 Very Difficult	10 Extremely Difficult
----------------	--------------------	-------------------------	---------------------	---------------------------

If it is difficult for you to ask for help, explain why:

I'm used to solving my own problems. I've never been one to open up with feelings or personal problems; I was taught to take care of things yourself. My pride gets in the way.

7. List community organizations, clubs, sports teams, churches, or synagogues that make up your social support system or which you plan to join in the near future:

Plan to return to church.

Plan to join a softball team.
