

SUPPORT NETWORK BUILDER

Templates and strategies for creating a strong support system

1. MAP YOUR CURRENT AND POTENTIAL SUPPORT

Why it matters:

Understanding your existing support network and identifying gaps is the first step to building the community you need as a mother.

Types of Support:

Practical Support: Help with childcare, meals, errands, household tasks

Emotional Support: Listening, empathy, encouragement, validation

Informational Support: Advice, resources, expertise, perspective

Belonging Support: Shared experiences, community, identity, fun

Support Network Mapping Exercise:

1. Draw a circle in the center of a page with your name in it.
2. Draw four quadrants around your circle labeled: Family, Friends, Community, and Professional.
3. In each quadrant, write the names of people who provide support, placing them closer to your center circle if they provide more consistent or significant support.
4. Next to each name, note what type(s) of support they provide using the following codes:
P = Practical, E = Emotional, I = Informational, B = Belonging
5. Circle areas where you need more support and brainstorm potential sources to fill those gaps.

2. PRACTICE ASKING FOR AND RECEIVING HELP

Why it matters:

Many mothers struggle to ask for support due to perfectionism, guilt, or fear of imposing. Learning to ask clearly and receive graciously strengthens your support network.

Effective Request Formula:

Be specific + Give context + Offer options + Express appreciation

Examples:

Instead of: "I'm so overwhelmed with the kids."

Try: "Would you be able to take the kids for 2 hours this Saturday? I have several errands to run and could really use the help. Morning or afternoon would work for me. I'd be happy to return the favor next month."

Instead of: "I wish someone would bring us a meal."

Try: "We're adjusting to the new baby and I'm wondering if you might be able to drop off a meal sometime in the next week? We don't have any allergies and would appreciate anything simple. Would Tuesday or Thursday work better for you?"

Receiving Help Graciously:

- Simply say "thank you" rather than apologizing or immediately promising to reciprocate

3. NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS INTENTIONALLY

Why it matters:

Strong support networks require ongoing investment. Being intentional about maintaining and deepening relationships ensures support is there when you need it most.

Connection Strategies for Busy Moms:

- Schedule regular check-ins with key support people, even brief texts or calls
- Create rituals of connection that fit into busy lives, like monthly coffee dates or walking meetings
- Remember important dates and acknowledge them with a message or small gesture
- Look for ways to combine childcare with adult connection, like playground meetups or family potlucks
- Express appreciation specifically and regularly for the support you receive
- Use technology strategically - set up group chats, video calls, or shared photo albums
- Create a 'relationship calendar' with reminders to check in with different people in your network

SUPPORT EXCHANGE IDEAS

These structured support exchanges can help build community while meeting practical needs:

Childcare Swap: Trade childcare with another family on a regular schedule (e.g., you take their kids one Saturday morning per month, they take yours another Saturday).

Meal Train: Organize a rotation where several families each prepare one extra meal per month to share with another family.

Errand Buddy System: Pair up with another parent to alternate handling errands for both families.

Homework Help Exchange: If you're strong in certain subjects, offer to help another family's children with those subjects in exchange for help in areas where you're less confident.

Carpool Arrangement: Create a schedule to share school or activity transportation responsibilities.

Skills Exchange: Trade services based on your strengths (e.g., you help with website design, they help with home repairs).

Parent Night Out Co-op: Form a group where parents take turns watching all the children so other parents can have date nights.