

Guidelines

This is a flexible tool that families can adapt for their own situations. Feel free to be creative. If you want, you can draw the circles on a larger piece of paper. You can use pictures, drawings, other symbols or words. The idea is for you, as a family, to create a picture or map of the people and influences that are a part of your world. Some are sources of support. Others are sources of stress. Some are sources of both support and stress. Below are some ideas for what might go inside the circles:

- 1) **Self** – The center of your world is your relationship with yourself and your inner belief system. Note your strengths and challenges. Note any conditions or qualities that deeply influence your life (such as athletic ability, hearing impairment or sense of humor).
- 2) **Partner/children** – List the names of your partner (if you have one), your child(ren), or whomever you live with and consider your family. Note their strengths and challenges. If you want, you can list ex-partners.
- 3) **Extended family** – List other family members in your life, including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles or cousins. Note the ways they help you and your family do well and ways they hold you back. These influences can continue for a long time, even after a family member has died.
- 4) **Friends, neighbors and culture** – List friends; neighbors; informal care providers; other members of a club, team, or cultural or religious group you're affiliated with; or others you have a relationship with by choice. These are the people outside your family who make a real difference (stressful or supportive). Note the ways they influence your family life. How does your informal network contribute to your family's well-being, or hold it back?
- 5) **Agencies, schools and institutions** – List people who are in your life because it is their job, such as school teachers, agency workers, job supervisors and coworkers. Note what you get from the relationship (for example: a paycheck, health insurance, an education, self-worth) and what you give (eight hours a day, the cost of having a car to get to work, time away from your children, etc.). How do these contribute to your family's well-being, or hold it back?
- 6) **Economics and community** – Note economic influences in your family's life (whether you're employed or unemployed, time limits on any public assistance you might receive, etc.). Describe your community and how it affects your family's well-being (whether you have a friendly or dangerous neighborhood). Note local, state, national and global trends that affect your family (such as video game violence, cuts in GED programs, affordable child care, etc.).
- 7) **Natural environment** – Note how the natural environment and its condition affect your family (for example, if your child has asthma caused by air pollution, if your family likes to relax at a park, etc.).

Next, you may find it useful to circle sources of support and make a box around sources of stress, or use different colors for each. Some people or influences may be both!



Adapted from the American Humane Association's Differential Response Primer curriculum


