

The Jack Petchey **Spark** Programme

a self-discovery programme for young people



**Discover how to be at your best
more of the time!**

Session 8: Building my support network

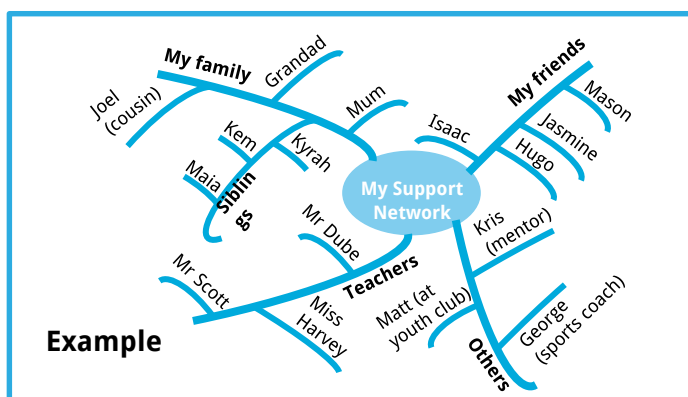
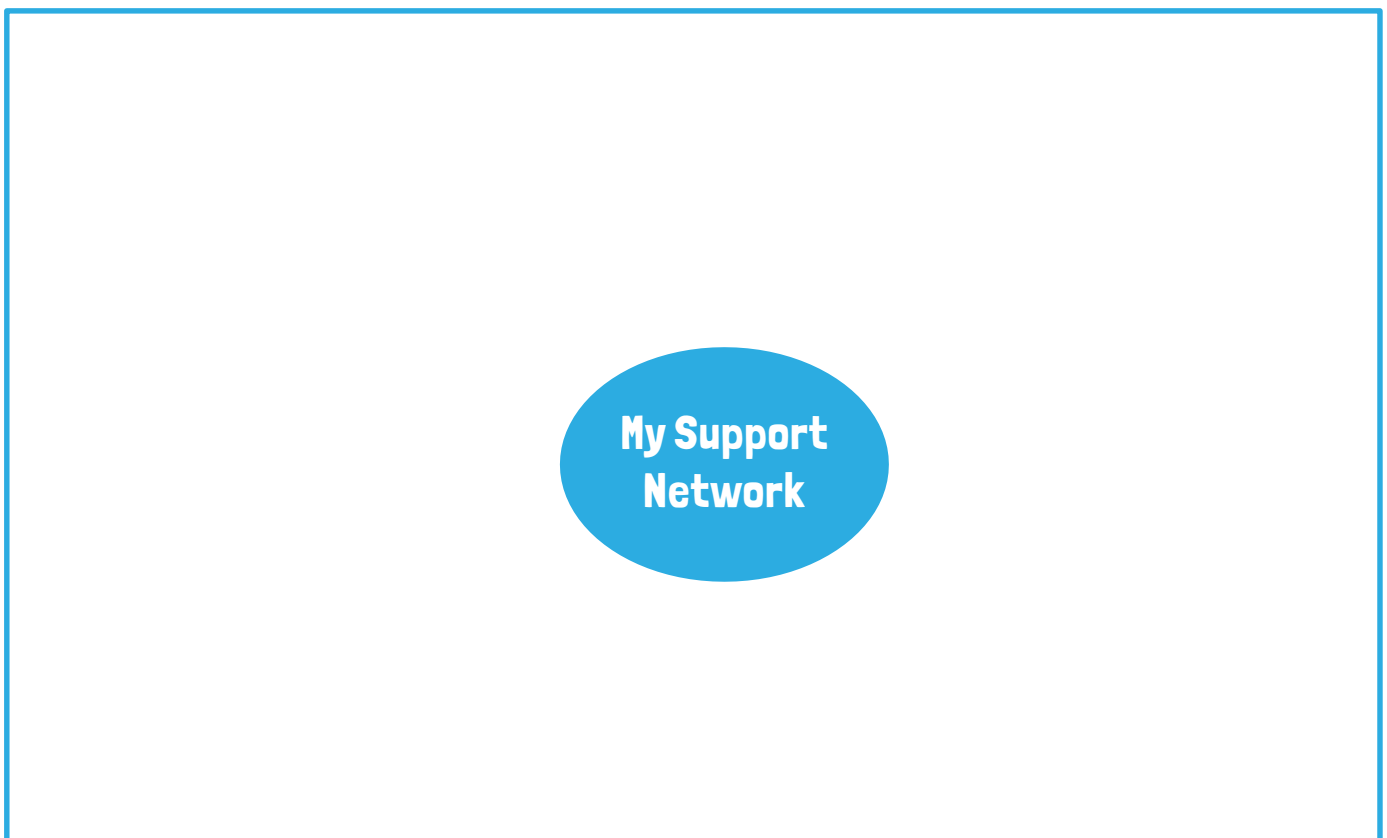
Building a support network

The ideas and tools we have introduced you to through the Spark Programme are powerful ones. If you practise them regularly, they will become second nature, and will help you to Be At Your Best more of the time. Building your personal resourcefulness in this way will be a great asset to you, but it is not the only strategy you should rely on. Humans have evolved to be social beings. Depending on, and co-operating with each other was important to the survival of our early ancestors, and we still have a need to connect with others.

Building your own personal Support Network of people that can guide, support, advise, and sometimes challenge you, is another important practical step you can take to enhance your personal resourcefulness and well-being.

Exercise: Mapping your network

Draw a mindmap showing your current support network. The main branches should show the types of people in your network. One might be family, another friends, another teachers, for example. Then add the names of the key people on these branches that you can turn to for advice and support. Those that you see or talk to frequently might be close to the centre of your map, with those that you feel less connected to, further away. See our example below.



Think about: parents, carers, siblings, grandparents, cousins, friends, teachers, coaches, team mates

Who else could you include?



Go Do!

Who would you like to build a stronger connection with or add to your network? **Create an opportunity to get to know this person better.** Sharing some information about yourself and what matters to you is a great way to quickly build a deeper bond.

Exercise: it's good to talk

Your support network might be more helpful than you realise. Whilst we often turn to those in our network when we are finding things difficult or have a problem to solve, our supporters can also help us celebrate our achievements, learn new things and see new possibilities for the future.

Who could you turn to, to help you in the following ways? Fill in the boxes below:

Who could you turn to if you needed cheering up?

Who could you ask for advice?

Who would be good at challenging you to think differently about something?

Who would you trust to give you some honest feedback?

Who would be good at helping you to solve a problem?

Who would you go to if you were concerned about your health?

Who could help you to make a decision about future work or study options?

Who could you ask for help with a personal issue?

Who would be good at reminding you of your strengths and qualities?

Who would be the best person to turn to if you were feeling really worried or anxious?

Who could you talk to if you were frustrated about something?

Who could help you to celebrate your efforts and achievements?

24/7 sources of help

If you are finding it difficult to cope with worries and pressures and a trusted member of your support network is not available, Childline and The Samaritans have someone available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

Childline www.childline.org.uk Tel. 0800 1111
Samaritans – www.samaritans.org Tel. 116 123

More helpful ideas and sources of support are available from

www.themix.org.uk
www.anxietyuk.org.uk
www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind
www.youngminds.org.uk

Top Tips for supporting others

- Try and ensure you are Out of the Box and At Your Best when supporting someone else
- Focus your attention on the other person so they can tell that you are committed to helping them
- Show that you are listening carefully by repeating back key words and phrases eg. '*So what you're saying is..*' or '*It sounds like you're worried about..*'
- Don't assume you need to give them a solution or fix the problem. Often just being there and listening will be really helpful for the other person
- Help them to understand what they want or need eg. by asking '*What do you want to happen?*'
- If the other person is at risk of harm and / or you feel out of your depth or uncomfortable, ask a trusted adult to step in and help.



Join a new activity or interest group to expand your support network.

Go Do!

This could be a club at school, a youth club, sports, music, drama, art or craft group, a uniformed group such as scouts or cadets, or an online group with the same interests.

Or join a volunteering or campaign group to help your local community or a cause you care about. Look for opportunities at vinspired.com, iwill.org.uk, doit.org or timebank.org.uk

Key Insights

- We all need support and encouragement from others
- Building a support network and making good use of all the different ways they can help you, will help you to overcome challenges and boost your potential
- To support others effectively doesn't mean you have to fix their problems or have answers. Just listening with care is often enough to help them feel better.

