

HAPPINESS AND THE "CIRCLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT"

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1. PREVIEW

The most powerful predictor of happiness is strong social support. Here we present a deceptively simple graphic tool for quickly assessing your social network--one I've used for years.

<http://www.mentorcoach.com/public-docs/circleofsocalsupport.pdf>

Note: If you can't open the page here's how to draw the Circle of Social Support. Draw a large circle. Make a small circle in the center labeled "self." Make a seven-piece pie chart. Label the seven slices intimacy, family, friendships, peer-professional, mentor, mentee, other.

Filling Out the Test

1. Print out the page at <http://www.mentorcoach.com/public-docs/circleofsocalsupport.pdf>
2. "Self" refers to you
3. Add today's date. This is a snapshot in time.
4. Think of the actual persons that fall within each category. How many true friends do you have? What are their names? How close are you to them? Place each person within their dimension. To save space, use their initials and then circle them.
5. Important: *Place* the person in the category in terms of how close you feel to them. Very close might be touching the circle of "self." Distant would be nearer the outer circle.
6. A given person may be in more than one category--for example--both "friendship" and "peer-professional".

Rough Category Definitions

1. Intimacy--often a spouse, partner, significant other, romantic partner -- typically includes a high degree of reciprocal self disclosure.
2. Family-- This does not include one's intimate partner. It can refer to one's nuclear family and/or extended family. A client can cut this slice in half and explicitly label one nuclear, one, extended.
3. Friendship--A person whom one knows, likes and trusts. Marked by mutual acceptance.
4. Peer-Professional--Colleagues. Those with whom you have professional relationships, where you receive feedback that your work matters in the world.
5. Mentor--Relationships in which *you* are the mentor or in which you nurture others. This could apply to the typical mentor, teacher, coach, therapist, parent.
6. Mentee--Relationships in which you have a mentor, where you are the protégé, in which you receive nurturance/learning/care from another.
7. Other--any other relationship the client feels is important.

Patterns Revealed

As you work with a number of clients, you will see patterns begin to emerge. For example:

- 1) The client whose mentoring slice is filled with dozens of people but their mentee circle is and always has been empty.
- 2) The work-at-home dad or mom with many friends but nothing in the peer-professional slice, and no feedback that their work matters in the wider world.
- 3) The man or woman with only a few distant initials in

the friendship slice.

4) The isolated self-employed person whose friendship and peer-professional slices have gradually reached their currently depleted status.

5) The person with many initials appearing in every dimension of the circle (who will almost invariably rate themselves as very happy).

Uses

1) Simply taking it is valuable. It provides clarity and often insight.

2) Quickly shows strengths and deficits.

3) Target a particular domain to improve--look at current practice, barriers, and new strategies.

4) Retake this test periodically. Track changes. Check for corresponding changes in happiness and life satisfaction.

5) Fill this out retrospectively (a) for one's whole adult life or (b) by decade of life.