

Activity 1

Mapping your support system

Materials: A3 paper, coloured pens. Work together in pairs on this exercise try to work with someone you don't know well.

Read through the following instructions before you start:

Take a large A3 sheet and on it draw a map of your support system. We mean all the people, systems and activities that contribute to your sense of well-being and enable you to be creative and effective in your work. This may include the walk to work, the books you read, colleagues and meetings you attend but it might also include the people who support you outside of the work environment, activities you take part in and ways you have found of relaxing.

Begin by drawing a picture or a symbol in the middle of the page to represent YOU. Then around this symbol draw other symbols, pictures, diagrams or words to represent all the things, people and activities that are positive, supportive influences in your life and help you to be effective.

Try to represent the nature of your connection with each of these supports by drawing each symbol of a size that illustrates their importance to you.

Are they near or far away from you?

Do you use these supports often or not at all?

Is the link strong and regular or distant and irregular?

Position each symbol on the page to illustrate where each person or activity lie in relation you where you are. Think about the nature of these supports.

Are they supporting you from below, like foundations?

Are they like balloons that lift you up?

When you are satisfied with your initial map select a colour you haven't already used and write words or draw symbols on the page to represent things that block you from fully accessing the supports you have identified e.g. friends and family may live far away or you don't want to burden your friends, or you don't want your supervisor to know you are behind schedule with your work, or no-one else understands your PhD project etc...

Talk to your partner about your picture when you are finished. Explain to them what the pictures and symbols mean and what your support structures are.