



Module 5 – Social Connections and Relationships

“Social connection is such a basic feature of human experience that when we are deprived of it, we suffer.” Leonard Mlodinow

Instructions

Please view the Social Connections and Relationships video before completing the checklists and worksheets. The video provides a comprehensive overview of the topic. While completing these worksheets, you may need to reference additional resources and reading. We have listed some resources that we have found helpful in the Additional Resources section.

Topic Summary

In the Social Connections and Relationships Module, we discuss the importance of social connectedness in adulthood and its impact on overall quality of life including self-esteem, happiness, mental and physical health, safety, and security. We also offer ideas on how to cultivate social relationships and discuss concerns relating to dignity of risk as well as dating/romantic relationships.

Checklists and Actionables

To begin, complete a basic inventory of skills that your child has that can help foster social relationships.

- Unique Skills _____
- Hobbies or Interests _____
- Participates in Sports Activities _____
- Participates in Community Activities _____
- Currently has friendships
- Money for social activities
- Belongs to/has roles in a faith community
- Participates in online social clubs or online games
- Participates in social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc)
- Has a means to communicate through email, texting, in person conversation, adaptive technology, telephone, etc.



Here is a list of who can help facilitate social relationships for your child.

- Friends, acquaintances
- Dating services/relationships
- Members of your faith community
- Friends of parents/siblings and other family members
- People with a shared interest or hobby
- Neighbors
- Parks and Recreation
- Service/social club/groups
- Sports teams and clubs (including Special Olympics Unified Sports)
- Community Centers
- Churches/Places of Worship

WORKSHEETS FOR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS PLANNING

- Circles of Support (Mount, 1985)
- An Associational Map (McKnight, 1996) and
- 75 Actions that Build Community (O'Brien, 2015)

On the first form, **Circles of Support**, you will depict all the people currently in your child's life and where the circle needs to be enhanced. The blue indicates people who are truly close to your child – not just people who say “hi” in school or your community. The green circle are people regularly in your child's life but are not “close” in the sense of mutually and reciprocally beneficial. The outer circle (pink) is other people known to/by your family. Some can perhaps be brought into the green or even blue circle if you reach out to them!

You may want to have your son/daughter complete his/her own Circle of supports, too, because there may be some people s/he remembers that you don't or that are important to him/her even if you never heard of them!

The **Associational Map** helps you think of existing organizations and other entities in your community open to people without disabilities that could offer social opportunities to your child. You may want to fill this out with someone else to make sure you don't forget anything!

The **75 Actions that Build Community** offer ideas for things you, your child, or your entire family can do to make social connections.



Each form has its own set of directions that should be reasonably clear. What is most important, though, is that you really identify people outside the human services system in developing your Circles of Support. The Associational Map supports your Community Resource Map by identifying organizations, clubs, and other groups that are for non-disabled people which can for the most part, under several federal laws, include your son or daughter. These associations may also be a source of human support in the form of making new friends based on shared interests, finding new options for employment or housing, etc. The 75 ways to build community are ways to open yourself and your child up to “connecting with others, building trust, and getting involved” (O’Brien, 2015).

You will want to update these forms as your son/daughter makes new social connections and develops new relationships or when you discover another association in your community that may be something s/he would like to explore!

Circles of support

Fill in the names of people you and other members of your family know. Then underline the names of those who **COULD BE** of assistance in planning, working toward, and/or achieving a valued life course. Then complete another page for your adolescent/young adult.

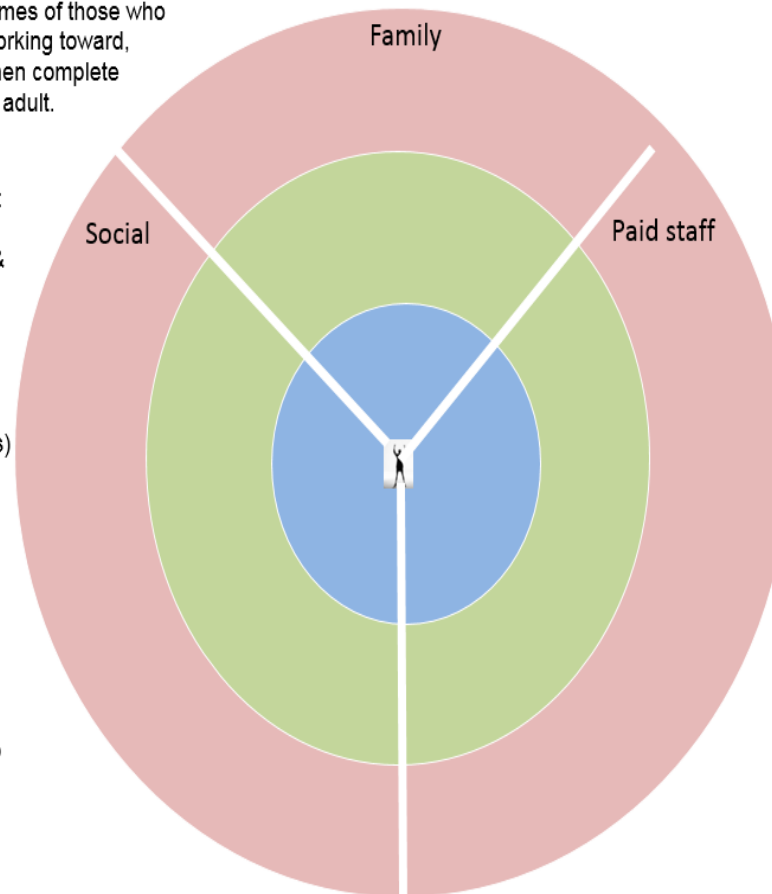
- Family circle members
- Adolescents/Young adults circle members

How to use the three concentric circles:

- **BLUE Innermost Circle** (intimate & reciprocal relationships)
- **GREEN Second circle** (regular friendly contact)
- **PINK Outer Circle** (casual contacts)

How to use the "Y" which splits the circles into three segments each:

- **TOP SEGMENT** = family members
- **LEFT SEGMENT** = social connections
- **RIGHT SEGMENT** = people paid to be in your life



A Guide to Developing Community Connections



An Associational Map

Prepared by John McKnight
Northwestern University
Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research

Associational life is rich in all of our communities. Learning about where the community networks are is useful information to have on hand. This is a guide to help you learn about the possible associations in your community. Use this list to think about the various organizations people belong to. You can identify groups in your area in a number of ways - talking to others, looking in the phone book, reading area and neighborhood newspapers, surveying churches and existing groups, checking with the Chamber of Commerce, etc. Make your own listing and use it as a resource as you think about connecting specific people.

Associations (examples)	Your Area
Artistic Organizations choral, theatrical, writing	
Business Organizations Chamber of Commerce, business associations	
Charitable Groups & Drives Red Cross, Cancer Society, United Way	
Church Groups service, prayer, men's, women's, youth, seniors	
Civic Events July 4th, art fair, festivals, Halloween	
Collectors Groups stamp collectors, flower dryers, antiques	
Community Support Groups Friends of the Library, nursing home, hospital	
Elderly Groups Senior Citizens	
Ethnic Associations Sons of Norway, Black Heritage Club, Hibernians	
Health & Fitness Groups bicycling, jogging, exercise	
Interest Clubs poodle owners, antique car owners	



75 Actions that Build Community-

connect with others • build trust • get involved

SOURCE: <http://inclusion.com/downloads/actionsthatbuildcommunity.pdf>

BY John O'Brien

(Adapted from www.bettertogether.org which identifies 150 social capital building actions)

Community grows stronger through hundreds of little and big actions citizens take every day. As you scan the list put a mark next to any of these actions that you or a family member has done either in the past month or so or for more occasional actions, in the past year or so.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invite neighbors over for a meal or barbecue | <input type="checkbox"/> Start or join a carpool |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a political meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a "Walking Tour" of a local historic area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support local merchants | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor or read to children or have children read to you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer your special skills to a community organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Run for public office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donate blood (with a friend) | <input type="checkbox"/> Host a party |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work in a community garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to serve on a committee outside of work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor a person of a different ethnic group | <input type="checkbox"/> Form a walking group (or a swimming group) with at least one other person & encourage each other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surprise a new or favorite neighbor by taking them food | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid destructive gossip or help someone else avoid it | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to church and connect with people and activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help another person outside your home fix something | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask an elder or a young person to teach you something |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend local school or children's athletics, plays, & recitals | <input type="checkbox"/> Host a potluck supper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get involved with scouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Take dance lessons with a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sing in a choir | <input type="checkbox"/> Become a trustee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a party in someone else's home | <input type="checkbox"/> Join a campaign & take action that brings you into contact with others (not just a donation) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores | <input type="checkbox"/> Gather a group to clean up a local park, cemetery or waterway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audition for community theatre or support a production backstage or volunteer to usher | <input type="checkbox"/> Bake something for neighbors or work colleagues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a lecture or concert | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant trees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give to your local food or clothing bank | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer at the library or primary school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play cards or games with friends or neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/> Call an old friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk or bike to support a cause and meet others | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for a class & meet your classmates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a political campaign | <input type="checkbox"/> Accept or extend an invitation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a local festival or parade | <input type="checkbox"/> Log off and go to the park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find a way to show personal appreciation to | |

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> someone who builds your local community | <input type="checkbox"/> Say hello to strangers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coach or help out with local (youth) sport | <input type="checkbox"/> Find out more by talking with a neighbor you don't know very well yet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to help a neighbor with garden work or shopping or a ride | <input type="checkbox"/> Host a movie night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start or participate in a discussion group or book or film club | <input type="checkbox"/> Help out with or create a newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cut back on TV & interact with people instead | <input type="checkbox"/> Collect oral histories to discover the interesting things people have done |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Join in to help carry something heavy | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to watch a neighbor's home while they are away. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make gifts of time | <input type="checkbox"/> Help out with recycling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greet people | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask to see a friend's photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you think someone needs help, ask to find out & do what you can | <input type="checkbox"/> Invite a local politician or official to speak to a group you belong to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fix it even if you didn't break it | <input type="checkbox"/> Start talking to people you see regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up litter even if you didn't drop it | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to the children you know and find out what matters to them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend gallery openings & art exhibits | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a reunion of family, friends, or people with whom you had a special connection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organize a neighborhood yard sale | <input type="checkbox"/> Hire local young people for odd jobs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read or listen to the local news faithfully | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter to the editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a public meeting or hearing & speak up | <input type="checkbox"/> Join a group that is likely to lead to making new friends of different ethnicity, or religion, or income, or life experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When inspired write a personal note or send a card to friends | |

What can we learn about community building from our own patterns of action?

John O'Brien



version 2.0



All materials courtesy of:

SOURCE: Davies, P., & Bolton, C. (1996). A guide to developing community connections. Placerville, California: Connections for Information and Resources on Community Living (CIRCL).

Starting small

In addition to the nine steps you have committed to in order to build your community and expand your circles of support, list 5 things you will start to do immediately to get this Life Course moving toward valued life outcomes for

Action Steps	Who's responsible	Completion date
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		