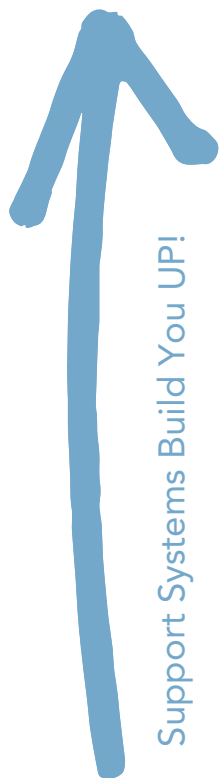


CREATING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Rare Caregivers and patients often feel isolated and find it challenging to connect. 51% report difficulty in maintaining friendships and 53% report feeling alone*. Since the rare care journey is often emotional and difficult, it is important to prioritize support. Research has shown that supportive relationships have many benefits. These include reducing stress, depression and anxiety; living longer; having higher levels of well-being; and acquiring better coping skills. So how do you build strong support systems? Figure out what kind of support you need then work on building and sustaining them. Yes it takes energy, but you will get so much in return.

Type of Support Needed



Different relationships check particular boxes. When you have limited time and energy, be intentional about the relationships you build & the people you surround yourself with.



Tangible

A service or a favor; reinforces that it's healthy to ask for help when needed and accept the help



Emotional

Acceptance, understanding, reliable encouragement and empathy; reminder that we are not alone



Affirmational

Feelings that build your motivation and respect your efforts



Informational

Receiving positive, supportive information or new knowledge; provides support without an emotional connection



Belonging

Belonging to a community or peer group that understands your beliefs and/or situation

Tips to Sustain Support Systems

- Respect boundaries
- Accept help
- Be available
- Be honest
- Be patient...it takes time to develop
- Stay in touch
- Reciprocate: support their successes and share appreciation
- Engage when it's healthy



This toolkit was co-developed by MGA WPA in collaboration with Give an Hour, a national nonprofit whose trauma-informed mental health frameworks informed the structure and tools included.

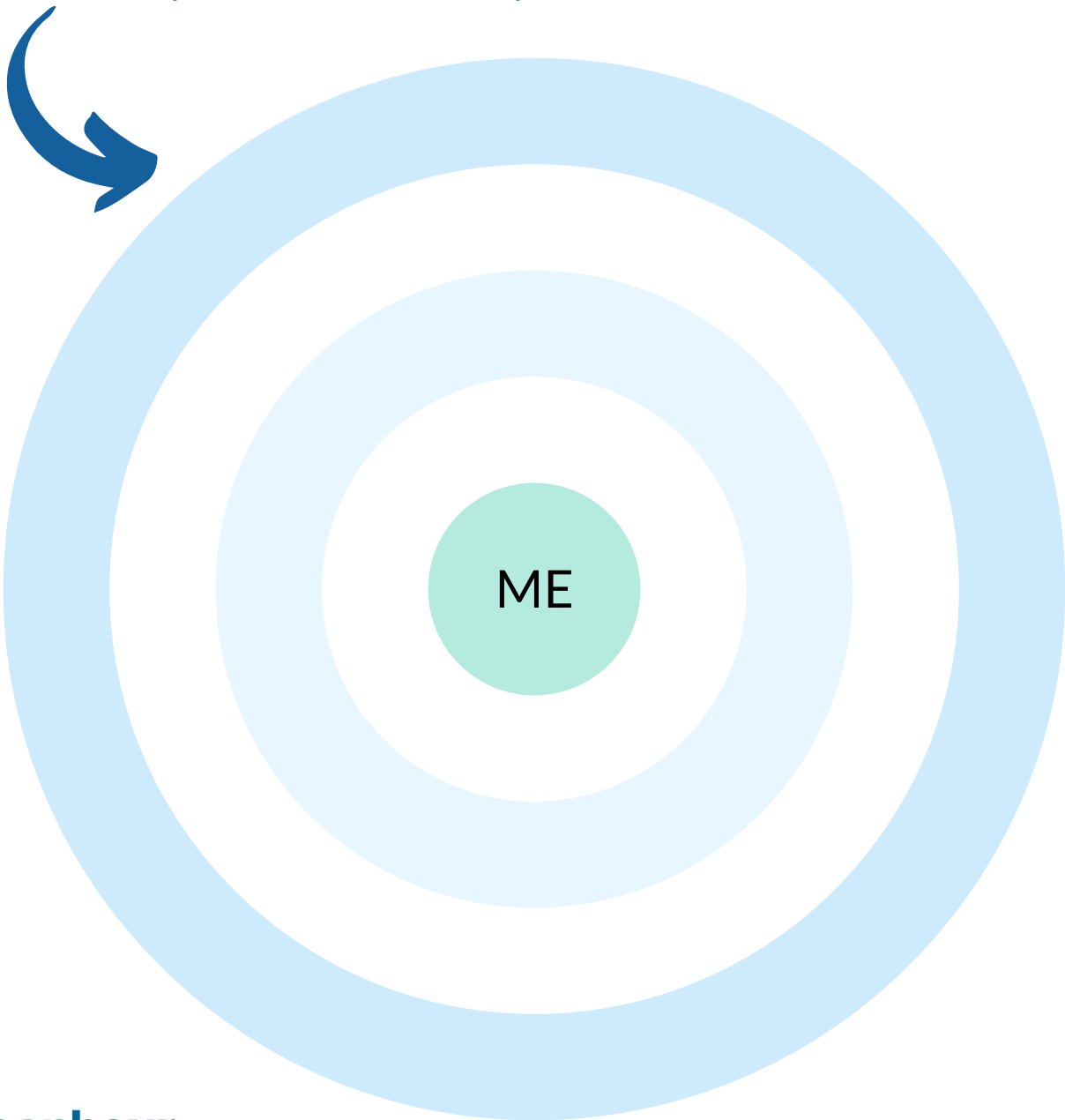
For more information visit GiveAnHour.org/ContactUs

My Support System

Building a strong support network is often a lifelong pursuit for many of us. According to researchers, the ability to seek support is closely tied to our mental health. It's important to emphasize that simply having access to social support is not sufficient. What truly matters is actively choosing to utilize and engage with those social supports available to us.

Write down who is in your system and make a commitment to reach out to these people and develop more relationships.

Center to outside: Me, Family, Extended Family & Friends, Acquaintances, Professionals & Helpers



My Support System Exercise

3 people I trust the most:

.....
.....
.....

People I can text sad/happy memes to:

.....
.....

Qualities that I look for in a supportive relationship:

My support needs:

People I want to invest in:

Relationships to reinvigorate:

Relationships to let go of or change:

Gaps in my support system

A person who I will let see me ugly cry and talk about my feelings:

Someone I can VENT to:

An online or in-person community where I can get support:

