

## Creating and Identifying Support Systems

### What is a support system?

A support system is a group or network of people who survivors can rely on to provide emotional support. They can lift survivors up when they are down, provide survivors with a shoulder to cry on, laugh with survivors when they need it, and listen when survivors need a willing ear. A support system can provide sensible options and advice that survivors can consider when deciding their next steps.

### Who can be in your support system?

- Family
- Friends
- Co-workers
- Faith leaders
- Counselors or mental health professionals
- Support groups
- Other survivors
- Advocates

### How do I identify someone I can trust?

#### Ask yourself some questions like:

- Who do I feel comfortable around?
- Who makes me feel safe?
- Who is a good listener?
- Who has supported me in the past?

#### Start a conversation about domestic violence or dating violence:

- How do they react?
- What do they say?

Remember that many professionals, like those who run support groups or DV advocates, are bound by confidentiality; they can't share what you tell them and shouldn't take any steps without your approval. You can find your local DV agency by visiting [domesticshelters.org](http://domesticshelters.org).

Due to isolation, you might not be close to individuals you once relied on. If it's safe, you can reach back out to those people. You don't have to tell them everything in one day, but you can begin rebuilding trust by getting coffee, talking on the phone, having a Zoom call, or sending them a text. It may take time to rebuild connections and reestablish trust, but that's okay and completely normal.



## Creating and Identifying Support Systems (Continued)

### Set Boundaries

#### What role do you want members of your support system to play?

It's okay if each person plays a different role. You may want a family member to just listen, go to an advocate for options, have a co-worker document incidents at work, and have a friend keep copies of your important documents and paperwork.

**Let (non-confidential) people know that you want all conversations to stay between the two of you.**

### Benefits of Creating Support Systems of Other Survivors

- Can help you feel less alone/isolated
- Can normalize and validate your experience
- Can normalize and validate your emotions throughout the healing process

#### Where can I meet other survivors?

- BTSADV Survivor Sister Retreat
- Join a BTSADV regional Facebook group
- Some churches and community groups offer support groups for survivors
- Contact your local domestic violence agency
- Search by zip code on Psychology Today for support groups

