



Building Support System for Your Family

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA

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Building a Trustworthy Support System for Your Family

Motherhood can be a tough and overwhelming journey, but that doesn't mean you have to struggle through it alone. Getting your support system in place can help create a valuable environment for your family to thrive and also reduce the risk of postpartum depression and combat social isolation and loneliness.¹ There is a reason why they say it takes a village to raise a child. Research has shown that having support allows parents to provide a more caring and healthier environment for their children. And these children go on to fare better in the long-term academically and socially compared to those who lack support.²

But who can you include in your support system? They can be anyone from family members, friends, teachers and even religious leaders, as long as they are people you respect and trust, and feel comfortable talking to.³

Here are some tips on how to build a trustworthy support system for your family.

1. Look into your current network

Ask for help from your friends and family. Chances are, they're ready to jump in to lend a hand but they just don't know what to do. Having a close network of friends and family can help when you need emergency childcare or just a breather from the demanding life of motherhood. It can be as simple as holding your child while you take a much-needed shower in peace or doing the laundry for you while you tend to your little one's needs. Sometimes it's the little things that add up to ease your workload.

While it's tempting to just try to do everything on our own, reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness and we will suffer from burnout sooner or later if we do not have people to help shoulder the burden. Even if they aren't able to assist physically, having the emotional support from friends can help take some stress off your mind.

2. Join a community for mums

Whether it's the mundane day to day struggles, or the exciting milestones your child has just conquered, sharing the ups and downs of motherhood with other like-minded mums can help you create a special bond with each other. The friendship with people who understand what you're going through can help provide the emotional support you need when the going gets tough.

You can search for them online, or join a local mum support group in your area. You may even find special interest groups such as babywearing groups or mum-and-me

exercise groups to find people who enjoy the same activities. While it's tempting to compare yourself with the other mums, remember that everyone has different circumstances.

3. Be the support you needed to others

Remember the struggles you had in the early days? One of the best ways to build a support system is by providing support to others first. Share your pregnancy journey with others, or let others know the life hacks you've learnt in motherhood. Sharing your experiences will help others lean on you and connect with you. It also creates a sense of belonging for you, so you will feel less alone and isolated. And in time, as you get to know one another, they too will be able to be the pillar of support for you.

4. Skip the negative and toxic people

Postpartum depression can be associated with the lack of support for mothers.¹ Surround yourself with encouraging people who can provide you a shoulder to cry. And stay away from those who tear you down, and criticise and judge your choices as a mother. People who send out negative vibes can make us miserable too, and it defeats the purpose of having a support system. Send them out the door, and instead welcome people who bring in joy so they can rub off on you when you need a little pick me up.

Don't go through motherhood alone

The demands of motherhood can make life a little lonely, but you don't have to go through it alone. Connect with the people around you and build your support system to cheer one another on. Just remember, relationships take time to build, so don't worry if your support system is just a small one at the start.

References:

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4720860/>

2. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1424-national-parent-survey-overview-and-key-insights>
3. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/08/the-importance-of-having-a-support-system/>

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