

Support systems

Knowing who to turn to if you need help is one of the most useful things you can do for yourself. Most people only try to work out who to contact when something has already gone wrong. By then, stress can make it much harder to think clearly. It's harder to know who to reach out to or what to ask for.

This resource helps you work out and map your personal support pod right now, before you need it.

What is a support pod?

A support pod is a named group of people and services you can turn to when you're going through a difficult situation. It is a list of people and services who care about you and can take action to support you.

Mapping this out helps because during moments of anxiety, confusion or crisis, your brain can naturally struggle to focus. Having a map ready means you have planned who to go to for support, especially when you might not have the energy to do so.

Note

Pods won't stay the same forever. They change as your relationships and environments change, and that is completely normal. The goal of this tool is to help you see clearly who is available to support you right now.



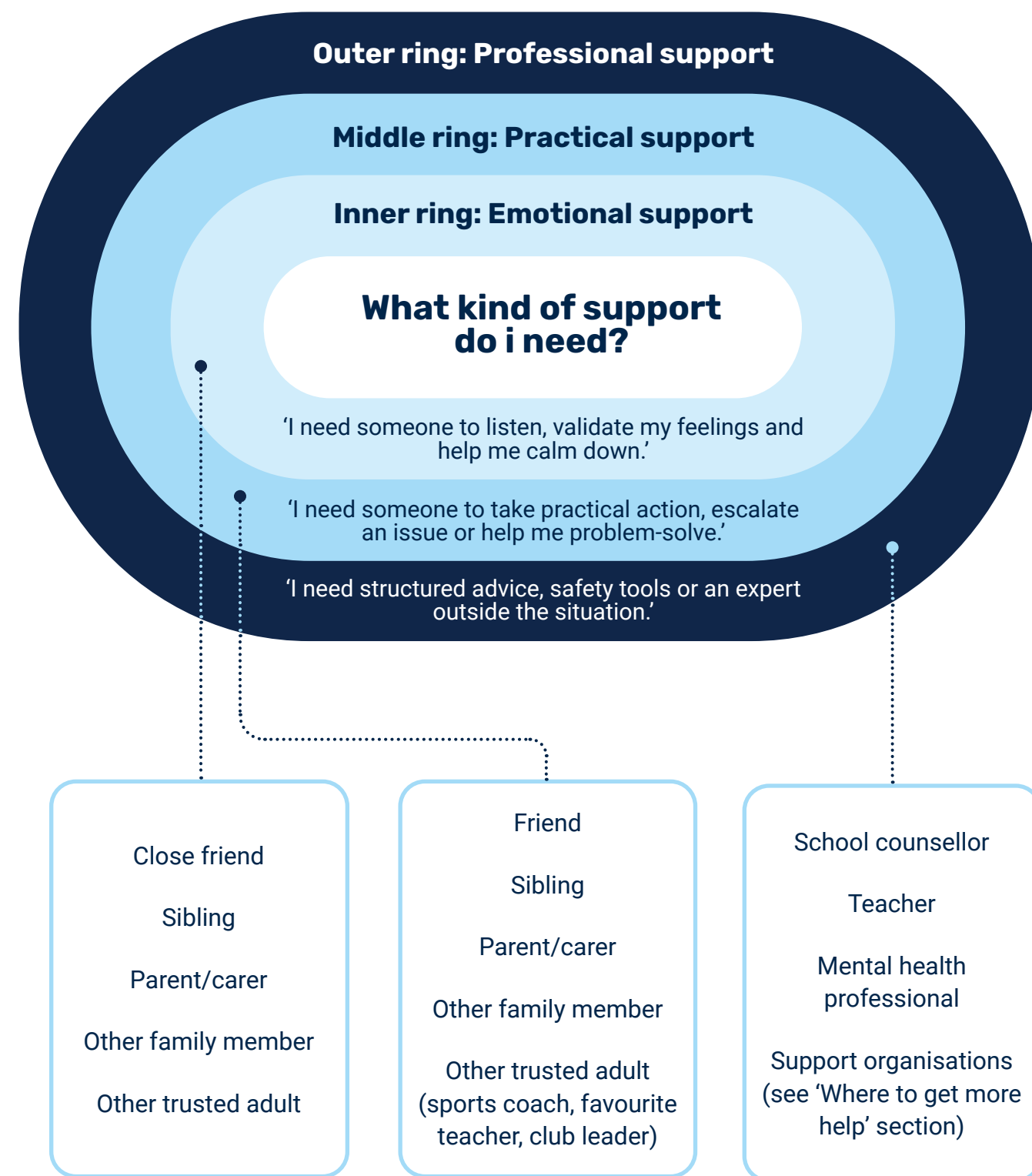
Different people for different things

The key to a good support system is recognising that no single person can provide every type of help. Different people in your pod have different strengths:

- One person might be the perfect friend to message when you just need to talk about how you're feeling.
- Another person might be a trusted adult who can help you navigate an unfriendly classroom or group chat.
- A third person might be someone who is excellent at sitting and listening quietly with you, without asking too many questions.
- The services at the end of this resource can also be helpful supports.

'Having a safe person is someone who you know you can talk to, and it will make you feel better.'

– YOUNG PERSON,
PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH
COLLECTIVE



Reflection tool: Mapping your support system

Use these questions to work out the people or services in your support system and what role each one plays. Then add this information to the spaces provided on this page. This will give you a pod map¹ of your support system.

Before you start, take a slow breath. This is a space to think things through without pressure.



Note

If you are struggling to think of anyone to put in your inner ring right now, that doesn't say anything about your worth. It doesn't mean you're without support – it just means your closest friendships and relationships are changing right now. Skip this ring for now and focus on the middle and outer rings. Services like Kids Helpline (listed in the 'Where to get more help' section) can be part of your inner ring right away.

Inner ring: My closest people (emotional support)

This ring is for the people you trust with serious information. Who could you call or message if you were in distress?

Write their name and what they are uniquely good at. For example, 'listening without judging, keeping a secret, making me laugh, helping me think logically.'

Name:

Strengths:

Name:

Strengths:

Middle ring: People I could reach out to (practical support)

Who else is in your broader life that you trust enough to approach for help or advice? This could be if a situation started getting complicated or was worrying you. This can include friends, extended family members, sports coaches, favourite teachers, club leaders or another trusted adult.

Write their name and how you know them – for example, their role, like a teacher or coach. Next to each person, write the type of support they would be good for. For example, 'trustworthy, will know how to help me, has helped a friend before.'

Name: Context:

Strengths:

.....

Name: Context:

Strengths:

.....

Outer ring: Services and support (professional support)

Sometimes you need support that goes beyond your personal network. This might mean advice from someone who isn't involved, staying anonymous or getting formal help. What official services, helplines or school-based options could you contact?

My school contact (write down the name and location of a school support person, such as a school counsellor, wellbeing officer or year-level coordinator):

School contact:

A helpline I can call (write down the name and number of a helpline you can call – there is a list in the 'Where to get more help' section).

Helpline:

Review:

When you look at your completed map, is there a specific area (emotional, practical or professional) where you have many options? Is there an area where you might need to find an additional contact?

If things got worse online or at school tomorrow, who on your map would be the easiest person to contact first?

You have completed your pod map. This resource can be added to and updated over time. Having your pod mapped out now means you will not have to work out where to turn in the middle of a difficult moment.

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety or overwhelm, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Counselling and guidance for children and young people experiencing bullying and other harmful behaviour, available 24/7.

headspace/ehespace: 1800 650 890 or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76 or 13yarn.org.au. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people): 1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

eSafety Commissioner: esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via their website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

Connected resources

- ◉ Am I just sensitive, or is it bullying?
- ◉ Things seem to be escalating. What should I do?

State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local policies and school context.

¹ Pod mapping is a concept originally developed by Mia Mingus as part of the Transformative Justice framework, adapted here for personal wellbeing, mental health safety, and help-seeking.