

Using the Life Circles Assessment to Identify Youth Supports

1. **Self:** At the center of the diagram is your relationship with yourself (and your inner beliefs and the way you make meaning of the world around you). Note your strengths, hopes and dreams. Note any conditions or qualities that deeply influence your life (athletic ability, sense of humor). Note what you also enjoy. If religion or spirituality is an important part of who you are, note that.
2. **People You Live With** (parent, guardian, sisters, brothers, etc.): Describe the hopes, goals, strengths, needs of the people you live with. Describe how they support you (for example, someone to tell secrets to, someone to give me a ride to soccer practice, etc.)
3. **Extended Family:** List extended family members here (aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.), including parents and brothers and sisters that you don't live with. Note their qualities or aspects of the relationship that mean a lot to you (for example, Sophie stays in touch, or Shivonne has a beautiful smile). These influences can continue for a long time, even after the family member has died.
4. **Informal Network and Cultural Influences** (Friends, Neighbors, Culture): List friends; neighbors; boyfriend/girlfriend; fellow members of cultural activities or groups; fellow members of a club, team, or religious group; others who have a relationship with you by choice. These are the people outside your family who make a real difference in your life. Note the ways they influence your life. Boyfriend/girlfriend may be listed in Extended Family, depending on how he/she influences your life.
5. **Formal Network** (Businesses, Schools, Fellow Students): List the formal places you are related to: the school you attend, place where you work, etc. List the people who are in your life because it is their job (your supervisor, co-workers, fellow students, teachers). Note what you get (paycheck, report card, self worth) from your association with them. Note what you give (10 hours a week of work, several hours each weekday in school and doing homework).
6. **Community Influences:** Describe your community and how it affects you (you live in a safe neighborhood, the neighbors help each other).
7. **Natural Environment** (Nature): Note how the natural environment and its condition affect you (flowers are beautiful in the summer, you like to relax in nearby park).

Once you have completed the Life Circles Assessment for yourself, you'll have a good picture of the people and other influences who shape your life. Now go back and look at this "map" of the influences in your life. Is each of the seven circles about as full as the others? If one of your circles is brimming over, while another is nearly empty, this may point out a place where you might focus on developing more connections. For example, if your Formal Network (Businesses, Schools, Fellow Students) circle can hardly hold all the things you wrote, but your Informal Network (Friends, Neighbors, Culture) only holds people you barely know and don't have a very deep relationship with, it could point out a place where you aren't receiving as much support as you could be.