

## Using the Life Circles Assessment to Identify Parent/Guardian Supports

1. **Self:** At the center of the diagram is your relationship with yourself (and your inner beliefs and cultural system of making 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 enjoy. If religion or spirituality is an important part of who you are, note that.
2. **Partner and Children:** List your partner's name (if you have one), and your child(ren). Describe your partner's and children's goals, strengths, needs, and hopes. Ex-partners can be listed here, or in Extended Family, Informal Network, or Formal Network circles, depending on how they influence your life.
3. **Extended Family:** List extended family members here, including grown children who are on their own. 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; informal care providers; fellow members of cultural activities or associations; 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 supportive difference in your life. Note the ways they influence your family life.
5. **Formal Network (Businesses, Schools, Co-workers):** List the formal institutions you are related to: The business you work for, doctors/hospitals, schools your children attend, etc. List the people who are in your life because it is their job (your job supervisor, co-workers). Note what you get (a paycheck, health insurance, self-worth). Note what you give (eight hours a day, keeping a car on the road to get to work, time away from your children).
6. **Socio-economic and Community Influences (Economics, Community):** Note socio-economic influences in your family's life (new federal policies mean your job is more secure, you live in a safe neighborhood, it's a good community for your elderly father). Describe your community and how it affects your family. Note local, state, national, and global trends that affect your family's self-sufficiency (video games, popular music, tax breaks for child care costs).
7. **Natural Environment (Nature):** Note how the natural environment and its condition affect you and your family (flowers are beautiful this summer, family likes 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 on 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 an imbalance in your life. For example, if your Formal Network (Businesses, Schools, Co-Workers) can hardly hold all the things you wrote, but your Informal Network (Friends, Neighbors, Culture) only holds people you have a polite but not very deep relationship with, it could point out a place where you aren't receiving as much support as you could be.