



Putting Down Roots

Teens' complex lives are constantly in flux due to the changes and challenges they face; therefore, support networks have been identified as one means of mitigating the stress and anxiety that day-to-day life can bring. The United Nations has identified teen mental health as a priority through its goals for 2030, having flagged this as a topic in need of more attention and investment if the goal of dramatically improving the situation is to be met.

While destigmatizing mental health concerns and guaranteeing access to services is essential, support networks provide connections and help less clinically and more permanently. First, teens need to recognize that they demonstrate strength when they ask for help, because there is no space for support without the willingness to appear vulnerable and unsure. Only then can students build, nurture, and take support from a varied network of friends, family, school community members, and professionals when needed. We have different people in our lives, which means we receive (and provide) various types of support, such as a friend who helps us decompress after a stressful exam, a family member or teacher who calmly listens and gives gentle guidance under challenging situations, and many others. Our connections make us strong.

It's time to become aware and document who you count in your support crew and what type of support you look to them for. When we receive this support, we're more likely to thrive, like a strong tree.

01 Present!

Once your Maker is done, present it to your class, either live or as a short video.

02 Discuss!

Watch other groups' presentations and discuss the questions:

- › What is similar about all the trees?
- › What differences do you see?
- › What do all groups consider important about their connection trees?

03 Get Informed!

Teen mental health is an important issue. If you'd like to help or learn more, find or start a school organization to help other teens who need more support than they are currently getting.

04 Take It on the Road!

With the help of your teacher, create a space in your school to display the trees with a brief description of what they represent and ways for teens to find support if they need it.

DO

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In this Maker, you'll work individually or in a small group to build a physical representation of your support network.



1. Individually list the people you count as part of your support network: family, friends, school professionals, etc.
2. Write a brief note about what type of support they give you: good listener, help you put issues in perspective, advice, etc.
3. As a group, brainstorm the form your tree(s) will take.
4. Use the tools and materials in the Maker Zone to build your tree(s).
5. Create a brief presentation to explain the tree and what its form symbolizes.

