Social Support Shorts Episode 2: What is Social Support?

Well, hello again. My name is August and welcome to Social Support Shorts: Episode Two. I am excited to have you here with me. Last time, our special guest Dr. O'Connell and I, we discussed why social support is important.

We talked about how it can lift us up and protect us from feelings of depression, anxiety, and burden – and all of these things, they're common and completely normal to feel as a caregiver, but social support can help us to manage those feelings.

Now, this time we are going to focus on a question some of you may have, and that question is just taking it back to basics: “What is social support?” Well, before I dive in, what do you think when you hear those words?

I'd invite you to take a moment and reflect on what you think of when I say those words, “social support.” Let's take a few seconds to write something down, or even just to think of some examples that may come to mind.

If you do want extra time, you can always press pause here as well, but we'll take a few seconds now just to reflect.

And welcome back. So, when you were reflecting or writing things down, did you happen to think about any people, friends, family, maybe some professionals or organizations in your life that not only provide support to you, but also make you feel supported where your needs were actually heard?

Well, that's the simple definition of social support. The people, including professionals and organizations in our life that you can lean on in times of need that actually make you feel supported.

And if you were thinking about some instances where that happens, while we had that pause, that's great. If you had a little trouble thinking of times where you were supported, that's all right too. That's why we're here together to think of ways to increase the level of support that you get.

Sources of support can include those natural collections we've made throughout our lives, such as friends, family, and neighbours. These are the people we can share a cup of coffee with, or who offer to help us with projects or come over with a warm meal when we're not feeling well.

It can also be the professionals we lean on for expert support such as doctors, nurses, or practitioners. And this may not be everyone's experience, but I can certainly count times when I went to my doctor with a concern, and I left feeling supported and listened to.

Maybe you had an experience where you found your local pharmacist to be a great source of social support when you needed more information on prescriptions or supplements and their side effects.

Could also be a formal organization as well, like your local Alzheimer Society or home care – or if you're part of a support group, it could be the group as a whole, or it could be the facilitator.

In addition, it could be just some members of that group that you really, really click with when you're talking with them – you feel like they listen and they're giving you support. It could even be something like transportation services that you use, or day programs.

If you're a spiritual person, it could be your spiritual community, it could be the spiritual leader, or it could be some members of the congregation.

And again, that's why we're here to get you to start thinking about the ways in which you are and aren't supported, and to work towards improving your level of support.

I'd like to thank you again for joining me on this journey. To help you think about your supports even further over the next few episodes, we will start talking about the different types of support that you may have available to you – what we like to call Support Superpowers.

But for now, this is August, signing off of this episode of Social Support Shorts.