Social Support Shorts Episode 8: Social Support Recap

Well, hello everybody. Welcome back to another episode of Social Support Shorts. This is August, and for this Social Support Short, I just want to remind you note takers out there that you can pause this podcast at any time in case something strikes you that maybe didn't strike you before, because this is going to be a recap episode. We're going to be reviewing what we've talked about and discussed so far.

Over the last set of episodes, we've been working towards building up your knowledge about social support. Through doing this, we have created a shared language which is really going to help us with the episodes going forward.

We first discussed social support in general. We talked about its definition, that it is the help you receive in various ways from the people and organizations in your life that make you feel like you are supported.

We also discussed why social support is important. Now it's important for everybody, each and every one of us, but it's really important for caregivers. You're on a journey, and in most cases, this journey gets a bit harder over time.

You take on new and increasingly complex responsibilities. You know, one day you're driving the person you provide care for to shop for groceries and then eventually you're having to shop for them – then you're having to meal plan, then having to cook or arrange for food to be brought in.

Or another example, having to ever more frequently help with home maintenance. First, you might be changing a light bulb here or there, then you're tidying up, you're doing the dishes, doing laundry, and then it eventually progresses into providing deeper cleaning of the home.

And as it gets more complex, some feelings can develop naturally – might be feelings of depression or anxiety.

You could be feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. You might be feeling a little burdened, and again, all of that, all of it is common. It can happen. It is completely normal, and there's a reason it's part of my research.

Most caregivers experience this eventually, but being connected to others in our lives and feeling supported by important others helps to manage these feelings. That's why social support is so important, but research also shows that for many caregivers, support can be optimized.

There can be problems with communication. There are also problems with mismatches and support, which can leave us feeling let down rather than feeling lifted up.

I've mentioned before how frustrating it is when you want someone to just listen to you and they start to try to fix things. Again, it doesn't always help, does it?

And that's where our Support Superpowers we talked about came in – knowing who our Listener is, our Cheerleader, our Doer, and our Knower. Because when we know what each person's Superpower is, that's when we can start thinking about what we need in the moment.

Was it a challenging day or was it a great day? One that happened after a few tough days, and you want to celebrate it? Wins or challenges - how great is it to talk about it with your Listener – that willing ear?

Or do you have something big coming up, some new challenge? Maybe you need a reminder of how capable you are. Well, who is your Cheerleader?

Maybe you have conflicts in your schedule. Do you need a Doer to complete that other responsibility? Or do you have to connect with a new organization like home care, but don't know the first steps? Well, a Knower might be able to help with that.

And in this way, our needs get matched, and when our needs get matched, not only do we feel supported in the moment, but we are also more likely to continue to believe that the support is there.

It might actually start this positive cycle where we ask for support more consistently, and it's also been shown that just knowing that we have people in our corner, that the support is there, can help to protect us from negative mood like depression and anxiety.

So, making sure that we are matching those Superpowers is just so important, and this brings us to the end of this short recap episode, but it's not the end of our journey together.

You probably have some questions like: “Well, all this is great, but what do I actually do with all of this information?” Well, that's a great question.

What we're going to do now is move into really thinking about the support that surrounds you.

Recognizing and creating lists that we can use to maybe discover some untapped supports, and we're also going to be discussing the best ways to communicate our needs.

For the next episode, I’d invite you to listen at home if you could. We'll be having a very short hands-on activity to create our first tool. You will need a writing space, a piece of

paper, a pen, a dessert plate and a glass of water, or a water glass empty, don't fill it up with water.

Anyways, I've left you with the mystery, you're wondering, you're waiting with bated breath. What are we going to be doing? Well, you'll find out soon on the next episode of Social Support Shorts. And this is August signing off. Thanks again for joining me on this journey.