

It Takes A Village

RESOURCE GUIDE

Helpful Links

- [Provider Directory | Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#)



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Understanding the Concept of “Village”

- Village is a term used to describe the literal shared space of a group of people who share cultural practices and norms.
- Village is also a term used to describe someone’s assigned or chosen support system like family and friends.
- Identify those who have supported you in pregnancy and your decision to breastfeed and know that connection to your community is important.

Types of Support

- **Physical** - someone helps look after you, your baby or your space.
- **Emotional** -someone listens, encourages, or provides emotional comfort.
- **Psychological** - someone offers support with your mental load.
- **Cultural Awareness and Affirmation** - friends and family who share your culture.
- **Visible Support Community** - those you can call on for support.



Healthy Community vs. Harmful Friends and Family

- Your support system may not be perfect, and that's ok.
 - Disagreements exist in a healthy community.
- Sharing about the ways you have or haven't experienced support is one of the best ways to help your support system to better care for you.
 - Some close friends or family may hold views that are misinformed, and some will hold views that are simply different from your own.
 - Be confident in the decisions you make for yourself and your baby regarding breastfeeding and avoid unnecessary disagreements or conflicts wherever possible.

Discomfort vs. Harm

- Not everything our community does may feel supportive, but it's important to emphasize when we're being harmed and when we're experiencing discomfort.
 - Two ways to manage relationships that feel uncomfortable:
 - Reduce the number of interactions.
 - Ask the person to help you with tasks unrelated to breastfeeding.
 - Place firm boundaries in conditions where harm is occurring:
 - Consistent negative feedback about your choice to breastfeed.
 - Deliberate actions to hinder, harm, or complicate your breastfeeding experience.
 - Emotional and psychological assaults about your breastfeeding choice like shaming or negative talk.
 - Peer or social pressure to end a breastfeeding journey.



Do I Need to Increase My Support Village?

- Not every parent enters parenthood with the perfect support system.
- Some villages are intentionally created.
- Define your support system:
 - Who has supported you in pregnancy and postpartum?
 - How do the people you have identified support you?
 - Why is their support meaningful to you?
 - Do I need to increase my support village if my needs are not met?
 - Ask your lactation consultant or support team about additional support programs that may be available to you.
 - [Provider Directory | Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#).

Ways Breastfeeding May Change How You Connect With Your Community

- Hormonal changes during lactation can impact your feelings, perception, or communication preferences.
- Socially, you may experience strain in some relationships due to varying levels of comfort with and opinions of breastfeeding.
- Physical changes to your body may cause you to avoid particular places, interactions or even conversations with your community.



Learning Your Connection Style

- Explore how you were raised.
- Be open to growing.
- Be honest with yourself.
- Communicate directly.
 - Be clear about the type of support you'd like to see while you are navigating breastfeeding.

Learn Together

- Learning alongside your support system can help improve relationships between you and those in your support system.
- Be brave in exploring the areas of support that you feel satisfied with and also the areas you'd like to see your village grow in.
- Listen to feedback on how your support system would like to grow also.
- Are there areas of conflict between your views and opinions on breastfeeding and those of your community?
 - Know that these differences are normal and okay because everyone will approach breastfeeding uniquely.
 - It is possible to honor and preserve these important relationships despite disagreements.



Lactation Consultants Can Help In Engaging Your Support System

- **A good lactation consultant should practice:**
 - Sharing your breastfeeding wins with family whenever possible.
 - Affirming your supportive community for being present and helpful.
 - Make space for your support system to ask questions or share concerns.
 - Remain positive about the roles your support system fills.

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