Session 7: Social Support

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Session 7: Social Support

Overview

A short brainstorming session is used to introduce a discussion about social support. Information is provided, followed by a roleplay (or discussion) in which a participant asks for or gives social support. As homework, participants are asked to collect information about sources of support and to practise (or just think about) eliciting social support.

Materials

- Relevant handouts
- Slides
- Flip chart, markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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</table>
| 1 | **Discuss homework**  
Social competence | Discuss experiences with  
**Option 1:** Practising socially competent behaviours  
**Option 2:** Telling someone that you have/your partner has PD |
| 2 | **Active Information**  
Brainstorming about social support | Definition: What is social support?  
**Importance** of social support for people with PD and their carers  
**How to obtain** social support from formal and informal networks |
| 3 | **Exercise and guided discussion**  
Asking for and giving support | Role play/Discussion |
| 4 | **Homework** | Finding sources of support; asking for support |
| 5 | **Appetiser** | Reflecting about the EduPark programme |
Goal:

- To support the application of knowledge and skills from the previous session (Social Competence) in daily life.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss homework</td>
<td>Ask participants to describe briefly their experiences with the homework from the previous session (practising social competence skills). Suggest ways to deal with any problems that arose.</td>
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</table>
| Option 1: Self-Report Sheet   | Participants were each asked to choose one situation in which they were not able to express themselves, and to write the answers to the following questions on the self-report sheet:  
  * What was the situation in which you were not able to express yourself?  
  * What was the unhelpful thought?  
  * What was the result?  
  * What helpful thought could you have had instead? |
| Option 2:                      | Ask participants whether they had any problems using the Self-Report Sheet.                                                                 |
| Patients                      | Participants were asked to think about how they would tell someone that they have PD, and about how PD affects them. If possible, they were to write this information on a card. In addition, if an appropriate situation arose, they were to actually tell someone about their PD.  
  * Did you write a card? If not, do you want us to help you with that?  
  * Did you tell anyone about your PD and if yes, how did he/she react? |
| Carers                        | Participants were asked to think about how they would tell someone that their partner has PD and about how his/her PD affects them. If possible, they were to write this information on a card. In addition, if an appropriate situation arose, they were to actually tell someone about their partner’s PD.  
  * Did you write a card? If not, do you want us to help you with that?  
  * Did you tell anyone about your partner’s PD? If yes, how did he/she react? |
Part 2
Active Information: Brainstorming about Social Support

0:30’ – 1:00’

Goal:
- To understand what Social Support is, why it is important for people with PD and carers and how it can be found through formal and informal support networks.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note for group leader</td>
<td>If desired, you can use Slides A–F (see Materials) to support the presentation of Active Information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definition: What is Social Support?</td>
<td>Social Support is a source of help from your relationship network that may directly affect your psychological and physical wellbeing.</td>
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<td>There are many different sources of social support, such as:</td>
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<td><strong>Formal Social Network</strong> – General Practitioners, Specialists, NHS, Care at home services (such as Meals on Wheels, home help), social workers, psychologists, respite care.</td>
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<td><strong>Informal Social Network</strong> – Family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours, PD self-help groups/associations.</td>
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<td>Importance of social support</td>
<td><strong>Emotional support</strong> can enhance your feelings of self-esteem and help you maintain your unique identity.</td>
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<td><strong>Practical support</strong>, including advice and information about health-protective behaviours, and suggestions about additional resources, can help reduce your emotional and physical stress, while improving your overall network of support.</td>
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<td><strong>Financial support</strong> provides economic benefits.</td>
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<td><strong>People with PD</strong>: Social support can help you cope with the feelings of loneliness, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and isolation that sometimes accompany the illness.</td>
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<td><strong>Carers</strong>: Social support can help you cope with psychological and physical stress, and help you to maintain your own “space”, separate from the problems related to PD.</td>
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## How to get support from the formal network

To get support from the formal network:

- **Know what your rights are.**
- **Know what organisations/systems are in place to provide information and support.**
- **Play an active role in the social network (in other words, use the support and help offered).**
- **Take part in social events, such as those organised by the Parkinson’s Disease Society.**

## How to get support from the informal network

To get support from the informal network:

- **Express your emotions.**
- **Ask for help, whilst maintaining autonomy.**

## Brainstorming

To start a discussion/brainstorming session, refer to the Appetiser given in the previous session (focusing on the support that participants would like to receive from their carers (for PD patients), family members, neighbours, associations, general practitioner etc.) and ask participants the following questions:

- **What do you mean by social support? Can you give some examples?**
- **To whom do you go to when you are in need?**
- **Why is it important to ask for and to give help?**

List examples of participants’ personal experiences on a flip chart.

To further illustrate the concepts, draw a diagram of the social network of one or more participants on a flip chart, as illustrated below:

![Example diagram of a social network](image)

**Figure 7.1** Example diagram of a social network.

At the end of the discussion, summarise the information generated, referring to the contents of the slides (see Materials for content of slides A, B, C, D, E and F). Whilst summarising the information, it may be helpful to refer to previous sessions, such as information from session 1 about formal social support.

## Handouts

- Slides A, B, C, D, E, F
# Part 3
## Exercise: Role play/Discussion  
1:00’ – 1:20’

**Goal:**
- To develop and expand participants’ ability to identify and seek appropriate social support.

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| **Option A:** Role play | Choose one of the following two options, based on which you believe is more appropriate for the group: A role play (Option A), or a discussion (Option B).  

**Role play:**
The group leader first asks the group to help come up with several typical situations that involve asking for help/giving support and involve both a person with PD and a carer (for example, for people with PD: asking for help in tying shoes, going to a doctor’s appointment; for carers: helping a person with PD to go to a meeting or to ask for information). You can also refer to the experiences participants mentioned during the Active Information component.  

The group then chooses one of these experiences to be acted by two volunteers, one who will play the part of a person with PD and one who will play the part of carer (even though in reality both are actually carers or both have PD). Stress the importance of acting the roles as naturally as possible.  

After the role play, ask the group to discuss the experience. To start the discussion, you might encourage both actors to share their experiences, asking questions such as:
- How did you feel during the experience?  
- How did you feel when you played the role of someone with PD/a carer?  
- Did you experience any difficulties when you played the role of someone with PD/a carer?  
- What would you have wanted your partner to do or not do, say or not say?  

Encourage the rest of the participants to offer their impressions, asking questions such as:
- What were you impressed by during the experience?  
- What would/wouldn’t you have done if you had played the role of someone with PD/a carer?  
- What is most important when asking for/giving support? |
**Option B: Discussion**

Lead a discussion about how to ask for and receive social support from your partner. To start the discussion, encourage participants to share their personal experiences of times when they asked for their partner’s support. You can refer to the experiences participants reported during the Active Information component, and ask questions such as:

- How did you feel about asking for/giving support?
- What were your impressions while asking for/giving support?
- Did you experience any difficulties when asking for/giving support?
- What would/wouldn’t you have wanted your partner to say or do?
- What is important when asking for/giving support?

**After Option A/B**

After the role play or discussion (either option), summarise the information, referring to the contents of slides G or H if possible (see Materials for content).

Hand out Guidelines for Seeking Social Support (PD or carer version).

### Seeking social support

*Slide G optional*

**How to receive support:**

- Ask for help only in case of real need, while maintaining your independence as much as possible
- Learn to share your own experiences with others
- Take an active part in self-help groups, sharing your experiences with the group
- Focus on your own abilities
- Learn whom to refer to for specific needs

### Seeking/giving social support

*Slide H optional*

**How to receive support:**

- Express and share your own emotions and feelings in intimate relationships
- Find time for yourself (for example, going out without the person you care for)
- Take care of your health
- Take an active part in self-help groups
- Learn whom to refer to for specific needs

**How to give support to the person you care for:**

- Let the person you care for freely express his/her emotions and needs
- Give support to the person you care for in activities of daily living without taking over

**Handout**

Guidelines for Seeking Social Support (people with PD/carers)
Goal:
- To increase participants’ awareness about social support while fostering their participation in their social network.

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| **Task A**    | **Collecting information about the formal and informal social network**: Ask participants to collect information about the formal and informal social network in their area and to describe it on the Social Support Questionnaire.  
                     
                     As an easier alternative, participants can simply think about the formal and informal social network in their area.  

**Task B** | **Asking for social support**: Ask participants to practise asking for social support, focusing on broadening or strengthening their social network. Ask them to then describe one of their experiences on the Asking for Support Questionnaire, explaining why it was important and how they felt.  
                     
                     As an easier alternative, participants can simply think about their experiences of asking for social support, focusing on broadening or strengthening their social network. If possible they can then describe one of these experiences on the Asking for Support Questionnaire.  
                     
                     Summarise the session, presenting Slides A, B, C, D, E, F, G or H again, if desired.  

| Handouts       | **Social Support Questionnaire**  
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Asking for Support Questionnaire</strong></td>
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Part 5
Appetiser: EduPark Education Programme

Goal:
- To increase participants’ awareness and understanding of their experiences throughout the EduPark Education Programme.

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| Reflect on your experiences during the EduPark programme | Ask participants to reflect on their experiences during the EduPark programme.  
Present the following questions (writing the questions on a flip chart if desired) and ask participants to consider their answers to these questions before the next session:  
1. *Has my knowledge increased as a result of taking part in this programme?*  
2. *Was it helpful to take part in the group? Why or why not?*  
3. *Did I expect anything else from the experience? If so, what?* |
Session 7: Social Support

Materials

- Slides A–H
- Guidelines for Seeking Social Support (people with PD) – handout
- Guidelines for Seeking/Giving Social Support (carers) – handout
- Social Support Questionnaire
- Asking for Support Questionnaire
A. SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social Support is a source of help from your relationship network that may directly affect your psychological and physical wellbeing.

| Social Network | Social Bond | Social Support |

B. DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

1) Formal Social Support (Formal Social Network)
   - General Practitioners
   - Specialists
   - Psychologists
   - NHS
   - Care at home services (Meals on Wheels, home help)
   - Social services
   - Social worker
   - Respite care

2) Informal Social Support (Informal Social Network)
   - Family Members
   - Friends
   - Colleagues
   - Neighbours
   - PD patient and carer associations
C. IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

**Emotional Support** (from friends, neighbours, colleagues, family members)
- can enhance your feelings of self-esteem and help you maintain your unique identity

**Practical Support** (from general practitioners, specialists, social workers, associations, care at home services, Patients’ Rights Associations)
- can help reduce your emotional and physical stress
- can improve your overall network of support

**Financial Support** (through social workers or other agencies)
- provides economic benefits

D. IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR PARKINSON’S DISEASE

- For people with PD: social support can help you cope with the feelings of loneliness, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and isolation that sometimes accompany the illness.
- For carers: social support can help you cope with psychological and physical stress, and help you maintain your own "space", separate from the problems related to PD.

E. HOW TO GET SUPPORT FROM THE FORMAL NETWORK

- Know what your rights are
- Know what organisations/systems are in place to provide information and support
- Take an active part in the social network
- Take part in social events
F. HOW TO GET SUPPORT FROM THE INFORMAL NETWORK

Express your emotions
Ask for help whilst maintaining your autonomy

G. GUIDELINES FOR SEEKING SOCIAL SUPPORT – PEOPLE WITH PD

How to receive support:
- Ask for help only in case of real need while maintaining your independence as much as possible
- Learn to share your own experiences with others
- Take an active part in self-help groups, sharing your experiences with the group
- Focus on your own abilities
- Learn whom to refer to for specific needs

H. GUIDELINES FOR SEEKING/GIVING SOCIAL SUPPORT – CARERS

How to receive support:
- Express and share your own emotions and feelings in intimate relationships
- Find time for yourself (for example, going out without the person you care for)
- Take care of your health
- Take an active part in self-help groups
- Learn whom to refer to for specific needs

How to give support to the person you care for:
- Let the person you care for freely express his/her emotions and needs
- Give support to the person you care for in activities of daily living without taking over
Guidelines for Seeking Social Support: People with PD

How to receive support:

- Ask for help only in case of real need, whilst maintaining your independence as much as possible
- Learn to share your own experiences with others
- Take an active part in self-help groups, sharing your experiences with the group
- Focus on your own abilities
- Learn whom to refer to for specific needs
Guidelines for Seeking/Giving Social Support: Carers

How to receive support:

- Express and share your own emotions and feelings in intimate relationships
- Find time for yourself (for example, going out without the person you care for)
- Take care of your health
- Take an active part in self-help groups
- Learn to whom you can refer for specific needs

How to give support to the person you care for:

- Let the person you care for freely express his/her emotions and needs
- Give support to the person you care for in activities of daily living without taking over
Social Support Questionnaire

Formal and Informal Social Network

Together with your partner/carer/friend, please collect information about the social network in your area and write it down.

Formal social network: general practitioners, specialists, NHS, care at home services, social services, psychologists, social workers, respite care.

Informal social network: family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours, PD associations
**Asking for Support Questionnaire**

*Please put a cross in the appropriate boxes:*

**From whom did you ask support?**

- □ Relative  □ General practitioner  □ Neurologist
- □ Friend  □ Partner  □ PD Association
- □ Psychologist  □ Other ................................................

**What did you ask for?**

........................................................................................................

**Did you find any difficulties in asking for help?**

Yes □  No □

If yes, what kind of difficulties were they?

........................................................................................................

**Did you overcome these difficulties?**

Yes □  No □

**Did you receive what you asked for?**

Yes □  No □

**How did you feel after this experience?**

........................................................................................................