

RQ Dimension – Socially Connected

About this Dimension

What is *Socially Connected* as a component of resilience?

Socially connected is an individual's ability to create effective and meaningful relationships with others. Closely related to Interpersonal Competence, this resilience dimension involves the *quality* of a person's personal and professional network of relationships. Resilient people tend to have a strong relationship network within which they share ideas, problems, solutions, frustrations, hopes, and so forth. In the face of adversity and stress, resilient people call upon this network for support, affirmation, and problem solving.

The foundation of Socially Connectedness is Interpersonal Competence – so to maximize resilience, a person needs to first strengthen this related RQ dimension and, using that dimension, develop a network of meaningful relationships with others.

Being Socially Connected, however, does not mean that a person's social network must be large – only that this network is meaningful and supportive. One or two *close* friends with whom a person can share his or her anxieties, fears, stressors, opportunities, joys, and so forth is far better than having numerous but superficial (aka "skin deep") relationships.

Why is this Dimension Important to Resilience?

Socially Connected is important to resilience because, when faced with turmoil, stress, trauma, change, and so forth, people need others to "lean" on for the purpose of venting, emotional support, and problem solving. The extent and depth of a person's social connectedness are key factors in helping people "weather the storms" of personal setbacks, trauma, loss, and misfortune. The deeper a person's socially connectedness the more resilient this person is likely to be.

Through social connectedness, resilient people are able to transcend their personal challenges and setbacks by utilizing the empathy and support that they receive from their relationships to "roll with the punches."

Without social connectedness, a person is likely to have a more difficult time working through challenges, setbacks, and stressful situations. Without others to vent to or problem solve with, an individual may find it more difficult to find his or her way through a difficult situation.

Socially Connected Quotes

You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you do not trust enough.

— Dr. Frank Crane

Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

— Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), American children's author (b. 1904, d. 1991)

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Others stay awhile, make footprints on our hearts and we are never, ever the same.

— Anonymous

Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow; Don't walk behind me, I may not lead; Walk beside me, and just be my friend.

— Albert Camus, French Existential writer
(b. 1913, d. 1960)

Without friends no one would choose to live.

— Aristotle, Greek Philosopher (b. 384 BCE, d. 322 BCE)

A friend is one to whom one can pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keeping what is worth keeping, and, with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.

— Arabian Proverb

He who has not the weakness of friendship has not the strength.

— Joseph Joubert, French moralist (b. 1754, d. 1824)

Friendship is a sheltering tree.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, British poet and philosopher
(b. 1772, d. 1834)

I get by with a little help from my friends.

— John Lennon, British singer/songwriter
(b. 1940, d. 1980)

It is one of the severest tests of friendship to tell your friend his faults. So to love a man that you cannot bear to see a stain upon him, and to speak painful truth through loving words, that is friendship.

— Henry Ward Beecher, American clergyman and social reformer/abolitionist (b. 1813, d. 1887)

A friend is one who knows us, but loves us anyway.

— Fr. Jerome Cummings

This communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in half.

— Aristotle, Greek philosopher (b. 384 BCE, d. 322 BCE)

Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence. True friendship is a plant of slow growth, and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity before it is entitled to the appellation.

— George Washington, First President of the USA
(b. 1732, d. 1799)

Only your real friends will tell you when your face is dirty.

— Sicilian Proverb

As the rest of the world is walking out the door, your best friend's are the ones walking in.

— Anonymous

A friend is someone who reaches for your hand... but touches your heart.

— Anonymous

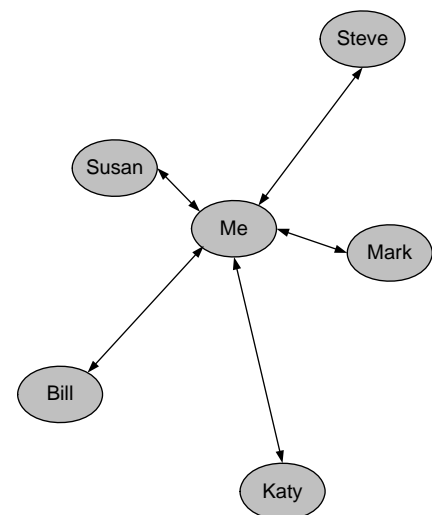
Strategies for Developing the Socially Connected Dimension

Strengthening a person's social connectedness involves strategies that guide the individual in reflecting upon the existence and depth of his or her social network. While a coach or workshop leader cannot help someone *develop* friendships, the coach or workshop facilitator can emphasize the value and role of social connections to help enhance a person's resilience.

Some ideas to encourage people to strengthen their Socially Connected dimension include:

On a personal, one-on-one basis . . .

- Give the person a blank piece of paper and tell him or her that he or she will be making a list of people within his or her social network to whom he or she feels comfortable sharing thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and so forth. (a) Encourage the person to place his or her own name at the center of the page and then to identify others with whom he or she might feel comfortable talking about the challenges, frustration, and so forth that he or she is facing. (b) Ask the person to write the names of these other individuals on the page – with those with whom he or she feels closest located closer to his or her name, with other names located at further distances from his or her name at the center and lines connecting each person to his or her own name. See the example to the right.



(c) Ask the person to write next to these people's names the nature of his or her relationship with each person and the areas of his or her life that he or she would feel most comfortable talking to this person about. Next, (4) ask him or her to reflect upon these relationships and the degree to which he or she is able to utilize the benefits from these relationships as he or she faces the challenges ahead. Finally, (5) ask him or her to identify some actions that he or she can take to either add new people to his or her social network or to strengthen the existing relationships. Note that social networks depend upon reciprocity, so encourage the person to be available, supportive, and encouraging to others in his or her network when they may need this from him or her.

- Ask the person to identify one thing that he or she could do to strengthen his or her social networks with others at work or in his or her non-work life.
- Invite the person to identify the single greatest obstacle that he or she sees to successfully building a strong personal social network of people that he or she could go to when needed—and actions that he or she will take to reduce or eliminate this obstacle.

- If an individual is facing a significant challenge or crisis, guide him or her in developing a personal plan for connecting with others that involves first identifying (a) *what* about the challenge the person wants to share with others and *why*, (b) what he or she needs from others (e.g., a shoulder to lean on, help in understanding the challenge or the way out of or through the challenge, someone to problem solve, and so forth), and then (c) strategizing how best to approach others in his or her social network regarding this issue. Note: encourage the person to focus on problem solving and solutions vs. only someone to “vent” to. Venting is a critical first step in the healing process—but it is only the first step. If the person is to find his or her way toward identifying and realizing a healthy personal outcome from his or her challenge, then the venting must transition into exploring solutions and pathways toward a healthy result.

Either on a one-on-one basis or when facilitating a group discussion . . .

- Use any of the activities from the one-on-one list above, inviting individuals to first work by themselves and then to partner with another person in the workshop and to share and gather feedback on their ideas.
- If the group has identified a set of problems or challenges facing the team or organization, organize the larger group into small discussion groups to discuss the value of social connectedness in one’s life and the appropriate role of co-workers and bosses in meeting this resilience requirement. Then ask the group to identify some actions that their team/department/company can take to facilitate and strengthen the emergence of social connections.
- Guide workshop participants in developing a *Personal Action Plan* for identifying others in their life with whom they feel some social connection and then identifying how to build and strengthen these social connections. This Action Plan should identify the challenge that he or she is facing, who in his or her social network might be a helpful resource that he or she could go to for support, guidance, direction, and so forth; and the specific steps that he or she will take to build and strengthen this social network. Invite participants to partner up with another person in the room with whom to share, discuss, and revise his or her action plan. Following the workshop, the facilitator may want to check in with participants (via e-mail, phone call, or face-to-face interaction) to inquire as to the progress the person is making toward strengthening his or her social connectedness.