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Identifying our Expert Companions

Step 1: Explain the term expert companion

An expert companion is someone who can help you get through difficult times. In many ways, an expert companion is the most valuable person in your support network: they take care of your emotional needs and offer the kind of support that truly makes a difference when times are hard.

Having an expert companion means having someone with whom you feel comfortable sharing your problems and know that you will not be judged. They are patient and treat you with respect and compassion, while offering ideas from a fresh point of view without trying to solve your problems for you. It is important to remember that expert companionship is all about the quality of your companions - not how many you have.

This exercise will help you identify the characteristics you need from an expert companion, the people in your network who are your expert companions, and the most suitable expert companion for your current needs.

Step 2: Identify what you need in an expert companion

People need different things from an expert companion. In fact, what you need may change over time and you may need different kinds of support from your expert companion at different times. This exercise will help you discover the characteristics you need from such a person.

Perhaps what you need is an expert companion who is compassionate and sensitive to your needs, or who motivates, encourages, and believes in your potential, or who listens patiently and provides guidance without judgment. Think of occasions when you felt understood, respected, and supported by someone. Who provided this support? How did that person make you feel? What specific things did they do or say that gave you the feeling of being understood?

Take some time to think about the characteristics that you need from an expert companion, write these in the table below.

WHAT DO I NEED FROM AN EXPERT COMPANION?



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Step 3: Identify the people in your network who are expert companions

Think about the people in your life who possess some of the characteristics you listed in step 2. These could be friends, family members, or even people you do not know particularly well who have experienced similar challenges to you or provided expert companionship which helped you or others in the past. Write down the names of these people and why you consider them to be your expert companions.

Name	is an expert companion because:

Step 4: Identifying an expert companion for your current needs

Now that you have identified the people in your social network who you consider to be true assets and expert companions, it is time to identify a suitable expert companion for your current situation. Refer back to the list of expert companions in step 3 and answer the following questions.

Is there currently a problem or challenge that would benefit from the support of an expert companion? What specific situation do you need help with?



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Consider your list of expert companions in step 3, who do you consider to be the most suitable person to support and help you with this problem?

What characteristics do they possess that would make them a good expert companion in this situation?

An expert companion is one of the most valuable assets in your social network, and your relationship should be nurtured: think of tending to your expert companion as if you were giving the most beautiful flower enough water to grow and blossom. With this in mind, do you feel that you currently spend enough time with this person? If not, what prevents you from doing so?

How can you devote more time and energy to this valuable relationship?