Why You Need a COPD Support System

by ERIC PATTERSON

Finding COPD Support

If you read many articles about coping with a chronic medical condition like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may find they have something in common. Many discuss the need for COPD support — people or things that provide you with assistance.

There's a good reason for this. Supports can boost your mood, be a shoulder to cry on, and provide a much-needed distraction when symptoms flare.

But what if you don't have many supports? What if you don't have any?

Often, people with chronic medical conditions report feeling that they have no supports. This could be because they either have expectations that are too high, they aren't identifying the supports they have in place, or they have pushed away the supports that were previously established.

Supports are too important to live your life without. If you think you have too few, consider expanding your definition of a support. Following the tips below will help uncover the supports already in your life while working to add more.

Check Your Expectations

People with any chronic medical condition tend to be prone to depression, which skews and distorts the way you experience and perceive life, and may make you feel as though you're all alone and have no supports at all. This distortion especially impacts the way you view relationships.

You may view these relationships as overly negative or unsatisfying. You may test people in your life, expecting them to meet your unrealistically high expectations, and then be disappointed when they fail. Gaining awareness and understanding of your own issues in building relationships is paramount.

People

The people in your life are the obvious choice for supports. Think about who they are and the level of closeness you have with them. Resist your urge to say "I don't have anyone," and look deeper.

Who have you seen or spoken to in the last week or month? Who have you communicated with online? Supports can be professional relationships as well as personal relationships.

Your doctors, your therapist, the person working at the coffee shop are all supports to some degree. Make a list of your support people.

Places

Does going to the park provide you with assistance? What about going to the movies or a restaurant? If you answered “yes,” then these places are supports to you.

This extended definition allows you to include more supports. Where do you like to go? What do you like to do while you are there?

Certain places can provide you with improved feelings of well-being and induce relaxation. Make a list of your support places.

Things

Do you have a pet that assists you? Do you have a favorite old sweatshirt that provides comfort? Count these as your supports as well.

Specific songs, movies or books can be your supports as well — don’t dismiss them. Instead, recognize their value and utilize it to its fullest potential. Make a list of your support things.

Rate Your List

With your lists of support people, places and things, rate the effectiveness and availability of each support. The supports that are most effective and available will be a 10 and the ones that are least effective and available will be a 1.

This master list will give you some direction in terms of which supports to seek out when your symptoms are in full swing and you need assistance.

Don’t allow yourself to think you are void of supports — supports surround you. It is your challenge to actively seek them out and accept their help. Identifying and embracing your supports will brighten your outlook and make each day a little better.