

## Resources to Assist Facilitators in Supporting Families

As a Facilitator, you will have the closest contact with the person at the center of the network and their family. The following worksheets may be of help to you in helping families in asking people to be in their relative's network and to answer some of their questions and allay some concern.

As your skills as Facilitator develop you will also discover strategies that support families in this endeavor. Please share your insights and strategies with the LifeSPAN Facilitator Coordinator so we can incorporate them in our training materials and share them with other facilitators.

### The Web of Friendship

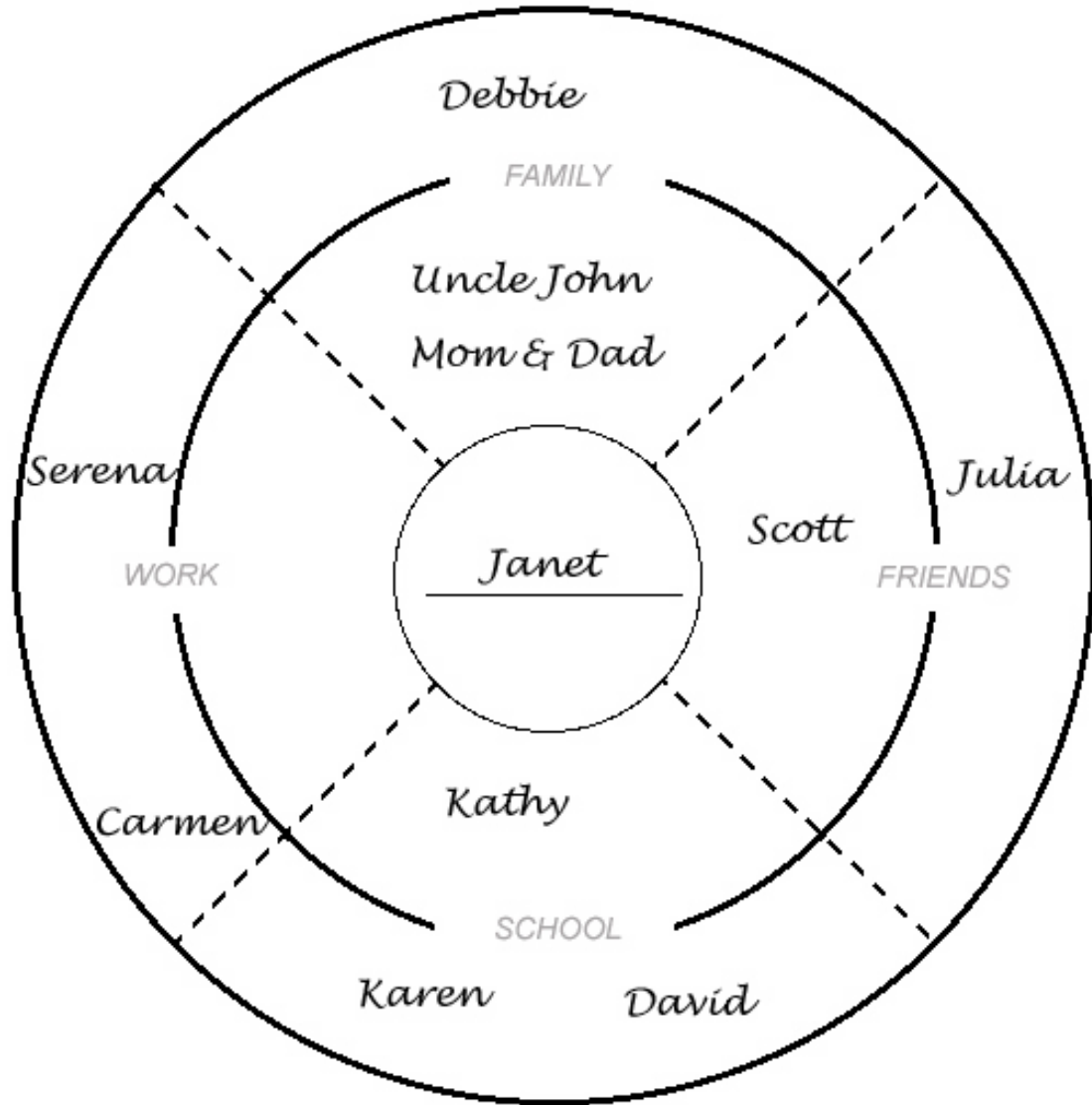
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The sample web has already been filled out. Follow these guidelines to fill out your own web:

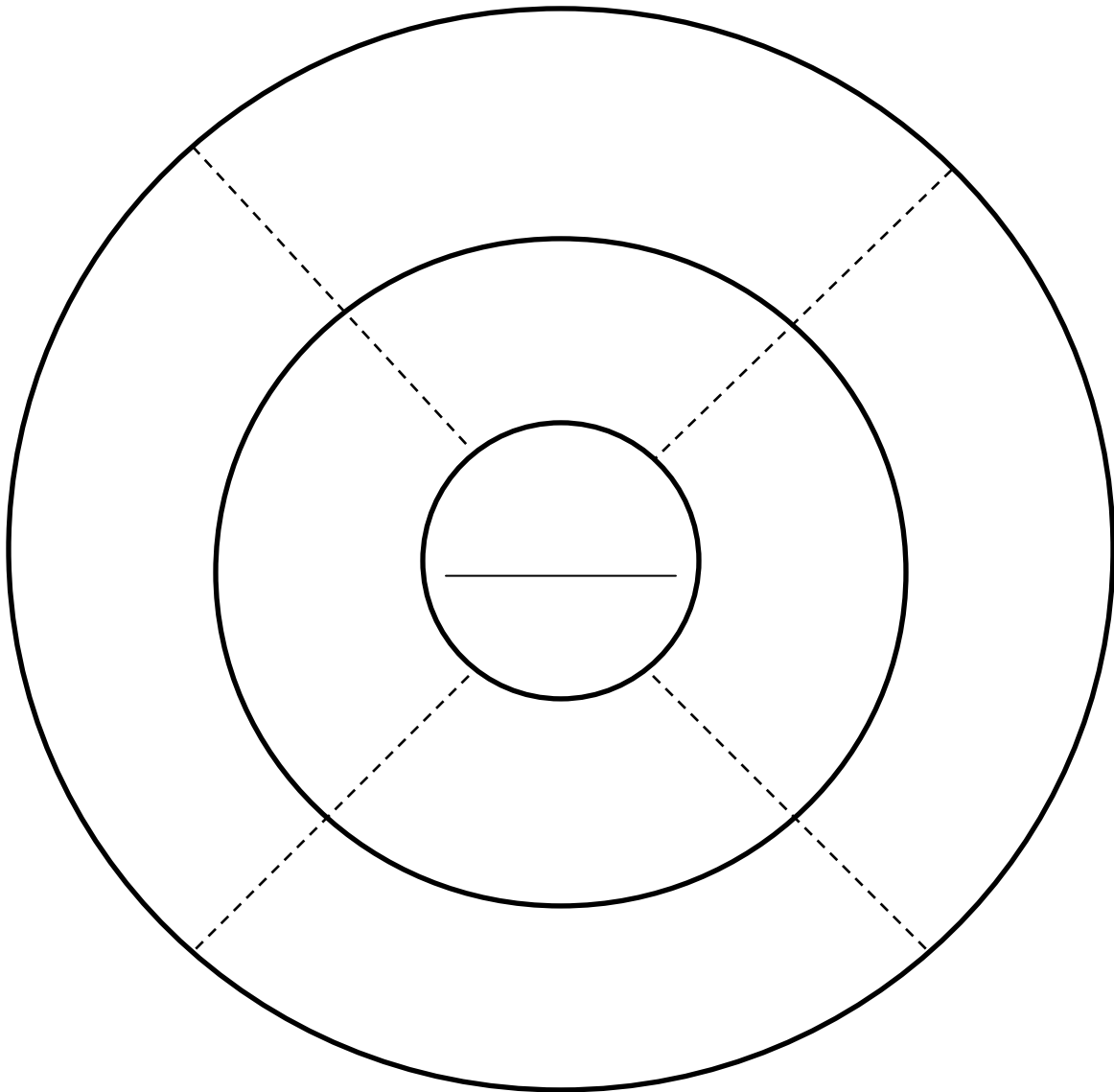
1. Write your loved one's name in the center circle.
2. The inner circle represents the area in your loved one's life that is filled with people they trust, feels comfortable with, and confides in. They can be friends or family. Put anyone in a paid position at least one circle out. The people in this circle will have a freely given reciprocal relationship with your relative, based on friendship and respect.
3. The remainder of the web represents the rest of the people who are involved in your loved one's life. Write their names down, using the distance from the center to represent how close their relationship is.
4. If you wish, the dotted lines can be used to indicate the different areas in your loved one's life. For example, family in the top section, friends on the left, school and work in the other quadrants. This will help you to visually demonstrate the interrelationships in your loved one's life.

When you have completed this picture, think about how you can strengthen the web, by joining up the people in your loved one's life. In a different colored pen, draw in all the potential connections.

# Sample Web



# Complete Your Relative's Web



# Tips for Families Building Networks

The following tips were written by PLAN™ families who have established a network of support for their relative with a disability:

## **Networks Take Time.**

The process of network development is slow and may, at times, seem to you as if nothing is happening. New relationships can take many months to build into something you and your relative can count on. The formation of a cohesive network takes place when time allows for many shared experiences between group members.

## **Networks Are Not a Cure.**

Networks are not a cure for all the concerns and challenges your relative may face. A network's job is to look out for your relative. A network will support your relative to pursue dreams and address issues. It is not a guarantee that all issues will disappear or all dreams will be realized. Individuals who have networks may still be lonely at times or continue to have trouble holding a job.

## **Network Building Can Be Uncomfortable.**

There are many issues a family must deal with when developing a network. These include the following: paying for services, listening to other people's ideas about our relatives, and letting go of some of the things we have always done for our relative. We have found that contact with other parents is essential. Your family has been assigned a Board Mentor, another family who has a network, to support you in working through some of the tough spots you might face. Don't hesitate to use these mentors.

## **Make Space.**

Carefully consider your involvement in the network. Many families decide not to attend network meetings. They are kept informed of network happenings by the Facilitator, network members, their relative, and Summary Reports and Newsletters of network meetings. Staying away from meetings may allow your relative to feel in control of the process and to create opportunities for network members to become more actively involved.

## **Patience.**

It is not always possible to find a new Facilitator quickly. Finding the right Facilitator for your family takes time. Each Facilitator brings unique qualifications. Screening and matching are done carefully. LifeSPAN takes the time it requires to find the best people possible for your family.

## **Communicate.**

Communicate with your Facilitator regularly. Be clear about your expectations for the network. Address any concerns you might have directly with your Facilitator.

## **Review Work Plans and Invoices.**

Carefully review your Work Plans to ensure the network's goals are in keeping with your expectations. Review your invoices by comparing them to the Work Plan. If you have any questions, contact the Facilitator or the LifeSPAN office.

### **Respect the Facilitator's Time.**

Be conscious of your Facilitator's time. Most facilitators generously give extra time and do not bill for short calls, etc. Most facilitators are uncomfortable with billing and it helps if you let them know you expect to be charged for the extras you request.

### **Expect Disagreements.**

Disagreements can occur in the network building process. You, your relative, and network members may have different ideas about the future. Your Facilitator and mentor are resources in resolving disagreements. When disagreement is addressed and resolved, a network becomes even stronger.

### **Use Your Mentor and Facilitator Coordinator.**

If you have concerns or questions about the network process or your Facilitator, call your mentor or the Facilitator Coordinator as soon as possible. Don't let concerns fester.

# Notes