



## Understand Social Support

This activity will help you to understand the different forms of social support and to consider the ways in which support can be helpful and, at times, not helpful.

### Instructions:

After watching Nancy and James's case study, answer the following questions.

1. What are some examples of **emotion-focused** support that Nancy provided? Were they helpful?


### Our thoughts about Nancy's emotion-focused support:

When Nancy told James she loved him and wanted to help, he likely felt supported. Likewise, when she encouraged him to open up and listened with understanding, he may have felt valued and cared for. Her emotion focused support was generally effective. However, ignoring some of his emotional expressions may have felt isolating and hurtful to James.

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2. What are some examples of **problem-focused** support that Nancy provided? Were they helpful?


**Our thoughts about Nancy’s problem-focused support:**

Nancy did many practical things for James such as finding movies for him to watch, and bringing him food, water and things to read. While some of the things that Nancy did were useful to James, they were not always effective.

Nancy's belief that James needed to "be taken care of" may seem natural. After a severe, **acute injury**, that may well be the case. However, people with **chronic pain** can manage best if they learn to do as much for themselves as possible. In this way, they can retain their self-esteem, a sense of independence, and as much physical stamina as possible.

By encouraging James to stay in bed or on the couch, Nancy was unknowingly encouraging further deterioration of James's body. Low activity levels lead to deconditioning and weakness, resulting in more pain.

By doing everything for him, Nancy encouraged James to feel, and become, dependent. This likely made him feel sad, angry, and bossy.

When James was grumpy and demanding, Nancy overlooked it, thinking he couldn't help himself. This simply rewarded his grumpy demands, encouraging James to become an unpleasant husband.