



*Balancing Life's Transitions Through Help, Hope and Healing*

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## **Build a Strong Support System** ***An "Inner Circle" is Key to Facing Life Head On***

LINCOLN, Neb. – Monday, May 11, 2009 – Most people in crisis feel isolated and alone. They build walls and alienate themselves from those closest to them who could offer valuable comfort and support.

But we're all social people designed to experience life together. We lose quality of life when we have many friends who don't really know who we are.

To face life head on, it's important to create an inner circle of friends – a core group of people we can count on to be there through our celebrations and challenges.

I recommend that everyone have at least four people in their inner circle who are active in their lives. Those in the circle should know your inner thoughts and feelings; and you should feel comfortable sharing your experiences with them no matter what the circumstance.

With an inner circle in place, you have a group of reliable and committed people who can pick you up and head you down the right path, and who empower you to be the best person you can be.

I encourage everyone to build a quality life by developing and/or strengthening enduring relationships. This building requires risk taking and effort, especially for those whose trust has been broken in the past, but it's a process that offers long lasting rewards.

So how do you build an effective inner circle? Here are five tips.

1. Choose people that share your values.
2. Choose people that you can trust with your personal information.
3. Choose people that see your character strengths and build them.
4. Choose genuine, caring, honest people.
5. Choose willing, available people.

For many, these relationships build naturally over time. Others must invite special people to be in their inner circle. First, ask them directly and expect to be a part of their inner circle as well. Second, spend regular quality time where deep conversation can occur. Make lunch dates or share special hobbies and leisure activities; then share thoughts and feelings. Include your inner circle in important life events like weddings, funerals, birthdays and other milestone celebrations.

Some of us have a difficult time developing relationships, but that can be overcome with professional help. If you need help, please call Red Tent Counseling, (402) 570-4605. Remember, your initial consultation is free.

I also recommend two books that offer guidance: "The Art of Friendship" by Roger and Sally Horchow, and "Why Your Life Sucks and What You Can Do About It" by Alan H. Cohen.

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