



CHAPTER 3

EVEN SUPERMOM NEEDS HELP

DEFINE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

- 🕒 **Suggested Time to Complete:** Twenty minutes, plus time to meaningfully connect with your network.
- 👍 **When you complete this exercise,** you will have identified your support system, and they will know how grateful you are for them. Then, when “life happens,” you’ll know who to call.
- ⊗ **If you skip this exercise,** you will be in a bind when you inevitably encounter conflicts or knowledge gaps. This exercise is like creating an insurance policy for your personal and business lives.

In her book, *Becoming*, Michelle Obama wrote that “Friendships between women... are built of a thousand small kindnesses... swapped back and forth and over again.” It’s time to create a list of the people in your life whom you can rely on for help, advice, or some other small kindness as a mom, human, and business owner.

If you find the notion of asking for help difficult, remember that relationships—whether personal or business—are two-way connections. If knowing *you* didn’t benefit and brighten the lives or businesses of the people on the lists you’re about to make, you probably wouldn’t even be thinking of them right now.

First, focus on your personal network of supporters. These are trusted family members, friends, and colleagues who are available to you. Aim to write down at least three people for your personal network and three for your business network—more is great.

1. Create a list of situations in which you might need to call on someone to help you. For example:
 - a. Your meeting with a client is running late. Who can you text to meet your child at the bus stop?
 - b. You’re helping an elderly relative recover from surgery. Who can watch your child so that you can help your relative?
 - c. You know that you’re more productive and a happier human when you can make it to yoga class twice a week. Who can help make this happen?
2. In the situations you listed, who can you call on for help? Think of your friends, family, and other parents in your circle. Try not to rely too heavily on one or two people. Take special care to not rely too heavily on your spouse or partner if you have one.

3. Your list can also include resources available to you. For example, my local YMCA offered members two hours of childcare per day. That's two hours of child-free work time! You might research options like drop-in childcare or sick-child care to see if these options are available in your area. Contact these places and form a relationship with them before you need them.
4. Next, call or have coffee with your supporters to talk about your plans and ambitions and ask for their support in the ways you've listed. As you do this, be sure to express your gratitude to them for the role they play in your life. Then, if appropriate to the situation, offer to reciprocate regularly or ad hoc (e.g., with occasional childcare).

Again, remember that most people *want* to be helpful and see you succeed. Other parents, especially, will understand your situation and want to support you. In life and in business, it really *is* true that we get by with a little help from our friends.

MY PERSONAL NETWORK		
What situation might I need help with?	Who can help?	Did I ask them and show gratitude?
If I have a meeting that runs late, I might not make it to school pickup on time.	Tessa or Emily, if they are also at the bus stop. My mom.	Yes!

Next, repeat the steps above for your business network. Think of situations in which you may need help or advice to get over a hurdle or to the next level. Again, be sure to consider resources that may be available to you in addition to people.

MY BUSINESS NETWORK		
What situation might I need help with?	Who can help?	Did I ask them and show gratitude?
I'm having trouble picking a final logo from the selection the designer sent me. I really want to get this right, since my business has grown enough that I'm ready to purchase signage.	Cora fits the profile of my target customer and works in marketing. I can ask her. Thomasina is a graphic designer. I can pick her brain over coffee.	Yes!
I keep running into an error in QuickBooks.	Delia is a book-keeper.	Yes! We are meeting on Wednesday. I'll write a thank you note and bring some chocolates to go with it.

⌚ **FAST FIVE:** If you don't have the time or space to complete this exercise right now, do this instead:

Personal Network: Think of *two* people (other than your partner) whom you can rely on in a personal emergency. Make sure you have their contact info in your phone.

Business Network: Think of *one* person you can go to with business questions. Open your calendar and schedule ten minutes to reach out to them sometime in the next seven days.