



# THE ECO-MAP



Eco-maps are visual tools that help us assess our connections with family, community and social networks, paying special attention to the quality of these relationships.

Eco-maps are frequently used by social workers to help us better understand our clients and help them achieve their identified goals. For this exercise the eco-map will help you to explore the strengths and weaknesses in your support network and identify what connections could play a helpful role in helping you achieve your self care goals.

You will use the diagram on the next page to map out the individuals in your life who, collectively, form your network of support. Using the legend provided, you will characterize the nature of your relationships. The follow up questions help you explore how these individuals can support you in achieving your identified goals.

**Review the instructions below before getting started and begin when you have 30-40 minutes of uninterrupted time.**

Questions or comments? Email [support@ariannataboada.com](mailto:support@ariannataboada.com).

# INSTRUCTIONS

## Step #1

Using the diagram below, place your name in a circle in the center of the paper. Alternatively, a piece of paper you can draw on by hand will do! If you are using your own sheet of paper, draw 3 rings around the circle, as the diagram below has.

## Step #2

The space between the circle (you) and the first ring represents immediate family. Think about who in your immediate family plays a role in your current self care, and then draw circles with each person's name within that space of the first ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

## Step #3

The space between family and the next ring out represents your community support system. Think about who in your community (i.e. peers you know through work, school, worship, gym, yoga, neighborhood associations etc.) plays a role in your current self care, and then draw circles with each person's name in the space between the first and second ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

## Step #4

The space with community and the next ring out represents the institutional or professional support systems in your life (doctors, therapists, yoga instructors, religious leaders, etc.) Identify the specific professionals or institutional representatives that play a role in your current self care, and then draw circles with each person's name in the space between the second and third ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

## Step #5

Remember to put a date on your eco-map. We are dynamic individuals and our relationships to others are always changing. Dating your eco-map helps assess the relationships or connections as they currently are, instead of how they have been in the past or how we wish they were. You can repeat the exercise after a few months to see how things have changed.

# WHAT DOES YOUR ECO-MAP TELL YOU?

Once the Eco-map is complete, you have the information you need to assess the quality of your support network. Use the following questions to help you think about how you can reach out to the individuals in your network for support, specifically in relation to your self-care goals.

In what ways can the individuals with whom you have strong, positive, or important connections with support your self care goals? Set a specific date and time to share your goals with them and request their support. The more specific you can be about the ways they can support you, the better.

For the individuals who have the arrows pointing towards you (representing the flow of energy & resources), think about the ways in which they currently support you. Can one of these individuals serve as an accountability partner for your self-care goals? Can you check in with them weekly, monthly, or whenever you need? Set a specific date and time to share your goals with them and request their support. Remember, the more specific you can be about the ways they can support you, the better.

What are ways in which you can make sure that your energy is not drained by your weak connections or stressful relationships? What boundaries can you set, so that you are able to re-direct your energy towards self-care? Set a specific date and time to share your goals and your boundaries with them. Clearly and directly let them know that you will be focusing your time and energy on these goals. Although they may not have a role in supporting you, directly communicating where your focus is will make them aware that you may not be focused on your relationship with them as much as before.

Are there any gaps or missing links in your support system that you need to help you achieve your self care goals?

Maybe you notice that you have plenty of strong connections at the family and community level, but could use some professional support. Or you notice that you are heavily relying on family members, and joining a community group might help you achieve your goals. Ideally, you want support at each level of the diagram, so that your network is as strong as possible.

**With a finished eco-map, you are ready to give your self care a boost to the top of your to do list!**

Are you a new mom and need help in creating your eco-map? I offer Self Care Start Up Packages for mothers who want their postpartum period to be as full of support as their pregnancy was and need some professional help along the way. Email [support@ariannataboada.com](mailto:support@ariannataboada.com) to find out more.

**[www.ariannataboada.com](http://www.ariannataboada.com)**

# ECO-MAP DIAGRAM

\_\_\_\_\_ A solid line represents an important, strong or positive connection. Use this line for individuals that you feel you can confidently

----- A dashed line represents a stressful relationship. Use this line for individuals who you interact with frequently but who you are worried may distract you from your self-care goals.

<-----> A line with arrows represents the flow of resources, energy or interest towards you. Use this line for individuals who you can count on to provide you with support in achieving your self-care goals.

