

Support Network

Summary:

When dealing with mental health, one of the most important things you need to have is a group of friends to support you. Your support network can provide perspective and help when you're feeling like your problems are insurmountable. Support Network is a cooperative card game for 3-5 players about supporting your friends and being supported by your friends.

Goal of the game:

The goal of this game is for all players to have all their needs met by their support network in as few turns as possible.

Cards:

Problem cards: Each problem card has a specific problem that the player needs help with from their support network. Help is broken down into 5 categories: Advice, Distraction, Encouragement, Humor, and Sympathy.

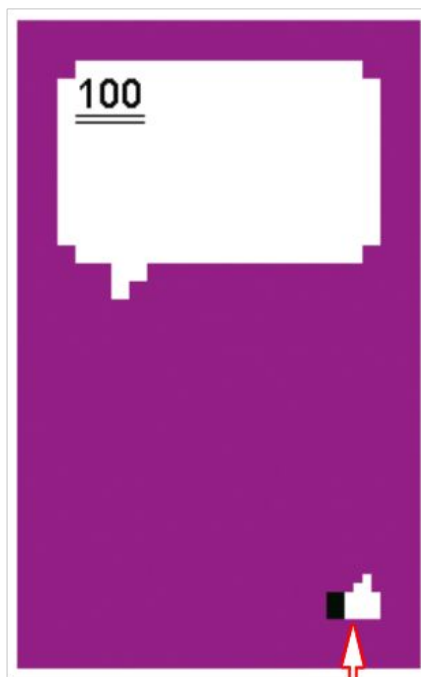
Message cards: Each message card represents an opportunity to help another player with their problem. Message cards are broken down into the same 5 categories.

Example Problem card:



The help that you need.
(in this example:
1 Sympathy, 1 Humor,
1 Advice, and 1 Encouragement.)

Example Message card:



The category of the card.
(In this example, Encouragement)

Rules:

Setup: Each player receives one Problem card from the Problem deck. Players may look at their own problem card, but it should be kept face down for the duration of the game. Each player then chooses a color and receives 4 Like tokens of that color, representing the four needs on their Problem card. Each player also receives four Message cards, which form their hand. The maximum hand size is five. After the cards are dealt, the top card from the Message deck is overturned onto the “How are you today?” card, to form the beginning of the chat history. The person who has had the worst day goes first.

Gameplay: Each turn consists of one action. An action is any one of the following: post a new message to the chat, Like the most recent message, draw a Message card into your hand from the Messages deck, or add a card to the pile of Things Left Unsaid.

Posting a message: You can post a message by playing a card from your hand to the bottom of the chat history. This becomes the most recent message.

Liking a message: A message can be liked by placing a Like token on the most recent Message card. This represents that one of the needs from your Problem card has been met by the message. Only the most recent message, at the bottom of the chat history, can be liked. You can't like your own message. You can only like each individual message once.

Ex: Beth needs three sympathy and one advice in order to help her problem. At the start of her turn, the most recent message is a sympathy Message card. Beth may now place a like token on that card, bringing everyone closer to helping her with her problem.

Things Left Unsaid: When you add a card to the Things Left Unsaid pile, it hints to all the other players that you need help of that message type.

Ex: Jane needs two humor and two distraction messages in order to help her problem. Jane happens to have a distraction card in her hand. On her turn, she adds the distraction card to the top of the Things Left Unsaid pile. This signals to the other players that they may help her by playing a distraction card on their turn.

Exchanging a card: As an action you may exchange a card by putting it face down at the bottom of the Message deck and then drawing the top card from the Message deck.

Ending the game: When you have placed all of your Likes in the chat history your friends have helped you with your Problem. Turn your Problem card face up to let everyone know! The game ends when all the needs on *everyone's* Problem cards have been met. If one player runs out of Like tokens, they should still draw, play, discard, or exchange Message cards until the game ends.

Scoring: Add the number of cards in the chat history and the number of cards in the Things Left Unsaid hint deck. Then, subtract the total number of Like tokens used ($4 * \text{number of players}$) from this number. The result is your score - smaller numbers are better scores.

Other rules:

When playing with four or more players, it may help to have an initial hand size of five and a maximum hand size of six, instead of four initially and five maximum with three players.

For an added challenge, have each player draw two Problem cards instead of one.