How important are family and friends?

Research is showing us that one of the most important factors that help humanitarian workers stay healthy is what we call “Social support”.

**Social support** is your perception of the quality of your relationship networks. If you feel that your relationships are plentiful, helpful, and positive, you have high social support. **It’s not so much about the quantity, but the quality of those relationships.**

- Several studies report that separation from family because of work is one of the most significant stressors humanitarian workers experience.¹
- More than one study reports that high levels of social support “buffer” humanitarian workers against stress and posttraumatic distress.²
- When humanitarian workers with low social support were compared to those with medium to high levels of support, they found that the staff with low social support were:
  - 4 times more likely to experience traumatization;
  - 3 times more likely to experience some form of “unwellness”;
  - 2.5 times more likely to experience some form of acute anxiety; and
  - 2.5 times more likely to experience some form of physical illness³

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