

WORKSHEET 9 · CHAPTER NINE · BREAST CANCER IS NEVER AN INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSIS

Building a Support System That Holds

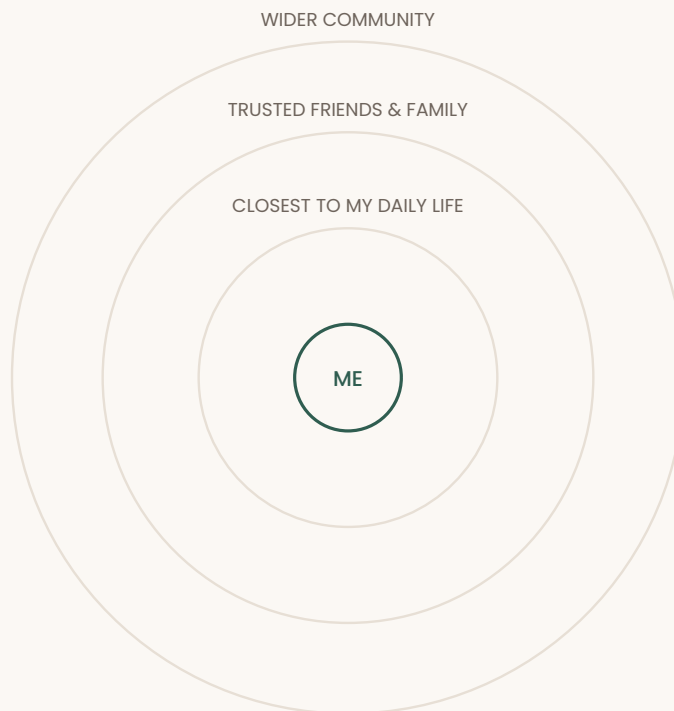
Not the perfect system. One that is honest, sustainable, and real.

I thought support would just show up. Sometimes it did. Sometimes it didn't. This tool is not about creating the perfect system. It's about building one that is honest, sustainable, and real.

STEP 1

See the Shape of Your Support

Write your name in the centre. In the second ring, the people closest to your daily life — partner, children, those in your home. In the third, trusted friends and family — the ones you can call when things fall apart. In the outer ring, your wider community: neighbours, church, coworkers, acquaintances.



Pause and look at what you've drawn.

- Who is closest to you?
- Who do you rely on most?
- And who might be relying on you?

There is no right configuration. Just clarity.

STEP 2

Name What You Actually Need

We often wait until we're overwhelmed to admit what we need. Start sooner.

Practical — meals, rides, childcare, cleaning, errands

Emotional — someone to listen, check-ins, presence without fixing

Spiritual — prayer, faith support, quiet, meaning-making

Then widen the lens.

Who in my life might also need support right now? Who is carrying this alongside me?

STEP 3

Match Needs to People

Support works best when it is specific and shared. Instead of hoping people will know what to do, ask:

Who is good at showing up consistently?

Who listens well?

Who organizes?

Who brings lightness when things feel heavy?

Assign small, clear roles where you can. Not everyone will be able to do everything. That's not failure — it's reality.

STEP 4

Let Support Be Organized

You don't have to manage everything alone. Be willing to ask for help organizing your support system. If possible:

- Create a group text or shared thread
- Use a meal train or a simple calendar
- Ask someone you trust to help coordinate

Asking for the support you need isn't weakness. It's wisdom.

STEP 5

Keep Asking — and Let It In

This can be the hardest part for many of us. You may feel like a burden. Like you should be able to handle it. Like it's been "long enough."

But support is not a one-time event. It's something that must be revisited, reshaped, and received again and again.

You are allowed to keep asking. You are allowed to need more.

What I Had to Learn

People don't always understand what support needs to look like. They may understand parts of it — but they usually don't grasp its full weight. People don't always know how to help, even when they want to. And support often fades over time. Not because you don't matter, but because life keeps moving on for everyone else.

That doesn't mean you are unsupported. It means you may need to build support more intentionally than you expected.

A Final Reflection

Support is not merely getting through this. It's not disappearing inside of it.

Turning toward each other — asking, receiving, staying connected — doesn't take the struggles away. But it does change how they are carried.

And often, it's that change that makes things feel not only bearable but possible.

This worksheet accompanies Chapter Nine of *Reluctant Warrior: A Memoir & Breast Cancer Emotional Survival Guide* by Dr. Christina Hibbert. It is a reflective exercise, not therapy or medical care. If it brings up more than you expected, that makes sense — please consider bringing it to someone who can sit with you in it.