
Appendix G: Eco-Map Exercise

Overview

This exercise helps map the client's relationships, stressors, and supports, both past and present. It is recommended to start by constructing an eco-map of the client's present-day functioning. As time allows, you may also develop an eco-map reflecting their life before functioning changed.

Instructions/Script

I'd like to better understand who is in your life. Let's draw a map together.

Present Day

On this blank sheet of paper, we'll draw a large circle (or circles, if you live in more than one household). Each circle represents a household where you live

Who lives with you here [point to a circle]?

Let's put them in the circle.

[Note to clinician: It's often helpful to include names and ages of these people. It is not important to use all genogram symbols, but the quality of the relationship should be indicated – strong/harmonious, stressful/conflictual, erratic/ever-changing, distant/limited, broken/ended. You and the client may also create additional symbols if the descriptors listed do not adequately capture the relationship dynamics. However, avoid using too many unique symbols, as this can make the eco-map confusing or overwhelming.]

How are you related to them?

What's it like living with [client's name for person]?

[May modify wording, goal is to get at the quality of the relationship. Depending on the youth's level of development, it can be helpful to also map out the quality of their relationships with one another]

Who else is an important part of your life? Let's add them to the picture.

[Note to clinician: Offer up examples of systems if the youth is having difficulty coming up with people and systems on their own: e.g., family, friends, neighbors, school, recreation/leisure, religious/spiritual home, work, health care, judicial system, other important adults.]

What's it like having [person/system] for a [relationship to youth]?

[Here again, you may modify wording; the goal is to get at the quality of the relationship. Depending on the youth's level of development, it can be helpful to also map out the quality of their relationships with other important people in the child's life, to identify clashes between microsystems.]

Finally, let's talk about what you put into and got out of these relationships.

[Note to clinician: Draw arrows and make notes to highlight stressors and supports, risk and protective factors, and the directionality of this flow of resources/challenges.]

How does [person/system] impact you?

How do you impact the [person/system]?

Is there anything else we should add to the map to help us see an even fuller picture of your life today?

[Note to clinician: It may be helpful to start to point out stressors/supports/risks/ protections at this point to the youth OR it may be more useful to wait and simply take note of these for yourself – clinical judgment is required here.]

Now that we have mapped these important people and systems, let's take a moment to reflect. Are there any relationships or supports that have helped you feel stronger, braver, or more connected?

Are there any areas where you would like more support, or changes that would help you feel better?

This map can help us understand not just where challenges have been, but also where strengths and possibilities for growth live.

Possible Symbols for Eco Map

	strong/harmonious
	stressful/conflictual
	erratic/ever-changing
	distant/limited
	broken/ended (include previous relationship quality as other line)
	direction of relational support (arrow points to person receiving support; double headed arrows for bidirectional relationships)

Systems to Consider for Eco Map

- Household members
- Non-household family members
- Friends
- Neighborhood
- School
- Work
- Activities/recreation/leisure spaces
- Religious/spiritual home
- Health care
- Judicial system