

Empowering Connections: Solution-focused VIP Mapping To Address The Loneliness Epidemic

Institute for Solution-Focused Therapy

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Relationships (VIPS) Matter!

- ☐ Shape the meaning and perception of your reality
- ☐ Loneliness affects as many as 1/3 of individuals in industrialized nations
- ☐ Social isolation, Loneliness and solitude differ
- ☐ Evidence indicates a heightened risk for mortality from lack of social relationships and is a greater risk than obesity
- ☐ Supportive relationships can mitigate risk and decrease the risk of self-harm
- ☐ Relationships are protective



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Expanding Your Understanding of VIPs

- *Very Important Presences (VIPs)* extend beyond people to include any significant force that shapes your emotional landscape.
- This might be the quiet comfort of a pet, the challenges of a chronic illness, or even brief interactions that leave a lasting impact.
- By recognizing these broader influences, you create new pathways for personal growth, resilience, and deeper insight.



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The Power of Presence

- Presence goes beyond physical proximity, leaving a lasting emotional and mental imprint.
 - It can come from a mentor's guidance, a loved one's memory, the challenge of a health condition, or spiritual energy that brings peace.
- These presences shape your thoughts, actions, and decisions, supporting your growth or testing your resilience.



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Influence and Choice in Presence



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- Presence and relationships are deeply connected, influencing both your internal world and external actions.
- These presences, whether supportive or challenging, maintain an ongoing connection to your inner life, much like relationships with people.
- By recognizing and affirming their influence, you gain the power to choose how to engage with them, shaping your responses with clarity and purpose.

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Broadening the Scope of VIPs (Complex – Changing)



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- **Very Important Positive:** People or aspects that uplift and support you, such as a supportive friend, a beloved pet, or a mentor.
- **Very Important Problematic:** Unwanted influences that disrupt peace but are part of your world, like an ex-spouse you co-parent with or community poverty.
- **Very Important Persistent:** Ongoing challenges or relationships that demand attention, like living with a chronic illness or long-term environmental concerns.
- **Very Important Past:** Relationships or memories that continue to impact your life, even though they're no longer physically present, like deceased loved ones or spiritual connections.

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Categories of VIPs (Expanding Beyond People)



Very Important Personal: Self-care and personal well-being

Very Important Physical & Psychological: Health conditions shaping your life

Very Important Powerful: Influential forces or key people – positive, challenging, complex

Very Important Positive: Supportive relationships that uplift you

Very Important Pervasive: Ongoing challenges affecting multiple areas – health conditions, poverty, politics,

Very Important Pets: Emotional support from pets

Very Important Planet: Connection to nature and the environment

Very Important Past: Impact of past experiences or relationships – including spiritual connections

Very Important Place: Home, community, and environments

Very Important Practices: Spiritual, creative, or daily activities that enhance your emotional and mental well-being – art, music, movement, exercise, healthy eating, food, sleep routine

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VIP Reflection



- Take a moment reflect on how these **Very Important Presences** shape your daily life
- How do these influences affect your decisions, emotions, and well-being?
- Which **VIPs** bring joy, and which present challenges that need management?
- What have you done to nurture or reshape these relationships to create a more balanced, supportive environment for yourself?
- By acknowledging these **VIPs**, you can better understand their impact and actively shape how you engage with them.

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Broadening the Power of Scaling with VIPs

- Scaling questions measure progress, and VIPs offer deeper insights.
- Examples of scaling with VIP perspectives:
 - *How confident would my friend say I am about taking the next step?*
 - *How well would my mentor rate my ability to manage stress?*
 - *How satisfied would my partner be with my self-care lately?*



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VIP Scaling for Growth and Action

- **What keeps that number from being lower?**
Reflect on strengths your VIPs may notice.
- **What would be a "good enough" number from their perspective?**
Set realistic goals based on their expectations.
- **What small thing would your VIP notice to raise your number by one point?**
Identify specific, manageable steps to improve.
- **When was the number highest, and what was different?**
Use past success to guide your next steps, shaping an actionable plan.
- By including VIP perspectives, scaling becomes more insightful, allowing you to set clear, deliberate actions for personal growth.



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Nurturing VIPs

- ☐ What do you most appreciate about them? What else?
- ☐ What would they say they most appreciate about you?
- ☐ What else?
- ☐ Who would notice?
- ☐ What would their “Best Hopes” be for you?
- ☐ What else?
- ☐ What do they know about you that you can be successful?
- ☐ What else do they know about you?

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Yourself as the Most Important VIP

- ☐ What have you done this past week to take care of yourself? (Physically, emotionally, relationally, sleep, healthy meals, exercise, fun, setting boundaries...)
- ☐ Was it helpful for you?
- ☐ How was it helpful for you?
- ☐ How did you decide to take time to care for your needs? How else?
- ☐ Who would notice you taking care of yourself?
- ☐ What difference would it make for you and others when you care for your needs?



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Classic VIPs

- ☐ Who are the most important people (relationships) in your life? (Family, Friends, coaches, mentors, teachers)
- ☐ Who would notice?
- ☐ Who else?
- ☐ What do you most appreciate about them?
- ☐ What else do you appreciate about them?
- ☐ Who has supported and helped you most?

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Dependent VIPs

- ☐ Whose wellbeing do you feel responsible for?
- ☐ Who relies on you for help and support?
- ☐ Who depends on you?
- ☐ What would they say you have done to support them?

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Pets, Plants, Nature, and Planet Non-human Species as VIPs



- ☐ Significant relationships for many, especially those coping with trauma
- ☐ Reflect your relationships with your Pets?
- ☐ Reflect on your relationship with plants, nature and the planet.
- ☐ What do you most appreciate about these relationships? What else?
- ☐ What would your pets, plants and the planet most appreciate about you? What else?
- ☐ Have these relationships been helpful for you?
- ☐ How have they been helpful for you?
- ☐ How have you nurtured these relationships?

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Spiritual VIPS



- ☐ Many people have lost cherished relationships in their life. Have you had to cope with this?
- ☐ Who are they?
- ☐ What do you most appreciate about them? What else?
- ☐ What would they say they most appreciate about you? What else?
- ☐ Would it be ok to invite them into this meeting? (If yes)
- ☐ What do you suppose they would say their best hopes are for you?
- ☐ What do they know about you that you can get through this?
- ☐ What else?

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Community as a VIP

- ☐ What do you most appreciate about your community? What else?
- ☐ Who do you most appreciate in your community? Who else?
- ☐ What would your community say they most appreciate about you? What else?
- ☐ What are your best hopes for your community? What else?
- ☐ What do you know about your community that it will succeed?
- ☐ How satisfied are you with your community from 1-10 (10 is the most and 1 is the opposite)?



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Powerful But Problematic Challenging VIPs



- ☐ Who decided you needed to come here?
- ☐ Who decides when you can graduate from this treatment episode?
- ☐ Who was worried or concerned about you and thought coming here would be helpful for you?
- ☐ What do know is needed to get them off your back?
- ☐ What do they know about you that you can get them off your back?

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Powerful But Problematic Challenging VIPs



- ❑ Relationships you want out of your life or off your back
- ❑ Outside systems externally motivating (Mandating) clients into treatment
 - ❑ Judges, social services, schools, employers...
- ❑ Ambivalent relationships
 - ❑ Substances
 - ❑ Domestic Violence
 - ❑ “Toxic” relationships

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Other VIPs (Relationships)

- ❑ Music
- ❑ Spirituality
- ❑ Electronics
- ❑ Cell Phones
- ❑ Substances
- ❑ Nature
- ❑ Social Media
- ❑ Any relationships the client identifies

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- ☐ What do you know are the most important qualities in a relationship for you? What else?
- ☐ How did you learn this?
- ☐ What relationships have been most satisfying for you? How did you foster these?
- ☐ What are your best hopes for your future relationships?

Future VIPs

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- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
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**Thank you for your service!
Thank you for your attention!**

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