

The Pyramid

AN INTRODUCTION - UNDERSTANDING THE PYRAMID SHAPE

The pyramid shape represents the groups of people and relationships that surround us, from whom we can access help and support. Starting at the top and then going clockwise around the corners of the pyramid, these can be:

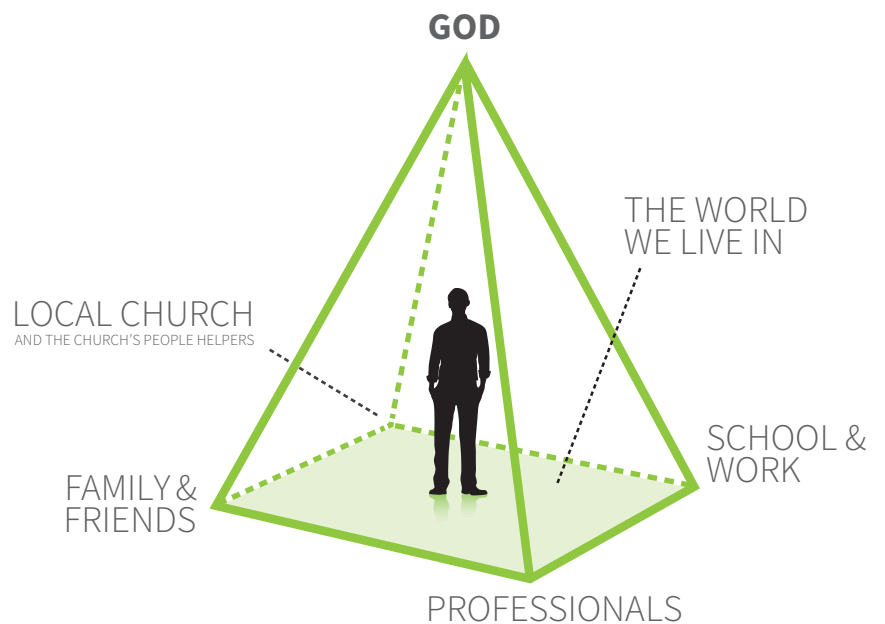
1. God.
2. Our family and our various friends.
3. The people we go to church with (including the ministry staff and people helpers of our church).
4. On this corner is the person's day-to-day connection with their workplace or place of education (their leaders at work or place of education may be of particular help with the problem or issue the person is facing).
5. The professionals' corner includes any and all professionals needed for the problem or issue the person is facing (tradesperson, Centrelink officer, school principal, GP, psychologist, etc.).

So the 5 corners of the pyramid represent who we're connected with in life.

There are two places you can be – either in the centre of your pyramid or on the outside of someone else's pyramid. Ideally, you'll be both. It is important that you have people surrounding you who are supportive, and it is also important that you are a support to others.

God is at the pinnacle of the pyramid regardless of whether a person is a Christian or not. Christians acknowledge God as being the pinnacle of the pyramid, and we can receive a ceaseless flow of his grace, mercy, love and joy. God's common grace is why a person can receive help from both Christians and non-Christians.

There are three major purposes for the pyramid.



1. THE MIDDLE OF THE PYRAMID

The first one is about being in the middle of the pyramid, and being supported. If you've ever spent time with a toddler, you'll know how dependent on adults they are. As we mature, we gain an understanding of complex relationships between ourselves and others. We become more independent and more willing to support others.

2. THE OUTSIDE OF THE PYRAMID

This is the second purpose of the pyramid. You're an outside person for other people in your life, whether it's your spouse, your children, your family, your friends, or people in your church/growth group.

3. THE WHOLE PYRAMID

The third purpose is to be able to link with others in serving a person. In terms of being part of their support network, we might fulfil the role of a friend, linking with the person's spouse, general practitioner, other friends, work colleagues and church members. This becomes a stable structure. We know that in engineering terms, multiple triangles create a very strong structure. The same is true for this shape. It represents a stable, supported life – with God breathing life into us from the top, and whom we are ultimately focused on.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE ARE TOO SUPPORTED OR TOO SERVING?

As mentioned, when we are children, we simply are at the centre of our own pyramid, supported by others. As we grow and mature, we are able to give support on the outside of other people's pyramids. If we remain in our childhood state, we become a couch potato (self-centred). However, serving in other-centred ways without good supports on your own God-centred pyramid is detrimental. We need to see ourselves as being on just one corner only of other people's pyramids (we wear one hat at a time). We also need to be well supported on the corners of our own pyramid. When this isn't happening, people experience burn out. A warning sign is thoughts like, "I've got to do it all myself and I'm the only person who can help." Like the airline cabin crews always remind us, we must put the oxygen masks on ourselves before we can help others. Self-care is necessary so we can then help others.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PYRAMID AROUND YOU?

If your pyramid lacks a stable base – if you have few people around you that you trust and can support you – you are at higher risk of experiencing loneliness, isolation, instability, and fragility. You may find that you don't feel very resilient and that life is a difficult struggle.

We don't believe that human beings were created to be alone, but rather to be in community with each other. That's why the Bible talks about being in the body of Christ, which is another way of saying that we belong to a community, a family of fellow believers. The Bible is equally clear that none of us can say that we don't need each other. It is not biblical to think that no one can serve you or that you won't serve another. Everyone has the capacity to serve, even children. You can see this ability develop as children maintain friendships with their peers. That's why we encourage young people to serve at their capacity.

WHAT IS OUR PART IN OTHER PEOPLE'S PYRAMID?

As we mature, we learn that we can also support others – so it becomes reciprocal. The closer the relationship, the more important it is to be reciprocal. In marriage, there needs to be

capacity for support both ways. In marriage, we can be like Jesus for our spouses in a proactive and intentional way. The ideal is both people serving each other to such an extent that one doesn't have to focus on their own needs. In this way, serving someone else allows them to serve others.

One of the major purposes of the pyramid is to link with others to support someone, so that you're not doing it all yourself. This is a great way to avoid burning out. You might enlist the help of others in your friendship group or small group, offer a helpful book, or go along to a doctor's appointment with the person you're supporting. This fulfils the third purpose of the pyramid – to link with others to help support someone.

In the various pyramids we're part of, we wear lots of different hats – professional, parent, spouse, small group leader, and friend. One person can have many roles (or 'hats'). The challenge is that we have too many hats and the hats eventually fall off. So we need to wear one hat at a time, and be deliberate about that.

The ideal is the whole body of Christ – or community of Christ - working together to help and support each other.

HOW TO ENGAGE OTHER HELP WHEN SUPPORTING SOMEONE ELSE

You might be unsure about how to engage other help when you're supporting someone. You could use engaging help questions like: 'Who else do you need?' 'Who else can help?' 'Who else could you have?'

They may not know, but it's important to offer them a choice. If they're not sure, you can make suggestions. 'How would you feel about seeing your GP?' 'What about your church?' 'What about going along to Playtime/Playgroup?' 'Would you like a book on the subject?'

Of course, engaging other help doesn't mean dropping that person in someone else's lap! You can be supportive as you engage other help – going along to an appointment, reading the Bible together, even something as simple as an email introduction or a phone call.

THE PYRAMID IS NOT STATIC

The pyramid will vary in size as you go through life. At certain parts of life, your pyramid will be large and at other times, will be small. If you move locations, your pyramid might shrink in size. Money might reduce your ability to access certain parts of the pyramid. Age may also shrink the pyramid. The size of the pyramid is fluid throughout our lives. The bigger and more linked, the better.

EVEN JESUS HAD A PYRAMID!

Jesus most famously had twelve disciples – all of whom formed part of his pyramid, but he also had two or three with whom he had a closer relationship. He also had his family (parents and brothers) in his pyramid. Most importantly, he had a close and perfect relationship with his Heavenly Father. It is his example that Christians strive to follow.