



LifeWorks
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Disclosing mental illness to friends and family

Deciding who to tell about your mental illness, and how much to share is a selective process. You may have fears about how you'll be perceived and the changes that could happen. But by carefully sharing information with trusted loved ones, you'll begin to build an invaluable support network, challenge the secrecy and stigma associated with mental illness and empower yourself in the recovery process.

Telling your young children:

Younger children aren't ready for detailed information, but they are likely to be aware of another person's emotions. Keep your answers brief and matter-of-fact and try not to over-inform. Show your children that regardless of your condition, you love them and your symptoms are not their fault.



Telling your teenage children:

Teenagers may have tougher questions than their younger siblings, but can handle more information. Allow the teen to ask questions, share concerns, and contribute to the discussion. Remember that when talking with teenagers, they tend to be more receptive to two-way conversations than lectures.

Telling your spouse and friends:

Will you tell only immediate family? Can you trust friends to stick around when the going gets tough? Deciding what and how much to tell those closest to you can be challenging. But loved ones can offer support and an understanding ear when you need it most

Consider the personality of the person you're thinking of sharing with. Trustworthy, open-minded, confident people are more likely to offer encouraging words and loving support. If you're unsure, start by saying you've been having a rough time lately and gauge their response before you reveal more information.



Utilize your Employee Assistance Program:

Talking with a professional can help you come up with a plan on how and with who to share your diagnosis.