



Disclosing your Experience to Others

Deciding who to share your experience with can be difficult. Some people want to share their experience, while others prefer not to. There is no right or wrong decision. Here are some points that can help survivors navigate this decision.

- Support from friends and/or family during this time can help aid recovery and healing. People you feel safe with may be good choices if you choose to share this experience with someone.
- Sometimes survivors feel that they are burdening others by talking about the assault. Remember people who care about you want to be there for you. It's okay to ask for help.
- Considering your family and friends' possible reactions is helpful in making this decision. Think about past and current relationships and history of support, and how you think family members and friends may respond.
- Responses vary widely from supportive and understanding to rejection and accusation. These responses may come from the same person over a period of time. Regardless of the reaction of the person you have told, you deserve to be supported and validated after disclosure.
- Sometimes, not telling family and/or friends may be the right decision. It's okay to decide to tell your support system later, or not at all. This is a personal decision.
- Friends, partners, lovers, and other significant people including roommates, may have a difficult time understanding your feelings and response. They may also be in need of counseling, not only to assist you but also to obtain support for their own feelings. They can contact VPVA or their local program to talk to someone.
- This can be difficult information to hear. It may helpful to let the person you're telling know you have something difficult to share. People will process the information in different ways, and it's okay if they need some time alone.

