



Social Support

Discussing your Mental Health with your Family & Friends

Talking about mental health with family and friends can be an intimidating experience. Oftentimes, people with mental disorders shy away from discussing their health with loved ones out of fear of judgment and feeling ashamed.

Before talking to those closest to you, keep the following things in mind:

- **Make sure you feel comfortable sharing your mental health with certain people:** Your mental health is your privacy. You are not obligated to tell anyone about your mental health challenges. Some family and friends may not be the best people to know about your diagnosis. Be sure of whom you would like to know and how you would like your diagnosis to be shared with others.
- **Consider cultural differences and interpretations of mental health:** Some cultural and religious beliefs do not recognize mental health as a real thing or take it seriously. Within some cultures, mental disorders are looked upon as a result of a character or spiritual flaw. It can be particularly difficult for people living within a culture that does not recognize mental disorders as valid to get the help that is needed out of fear of the outcomes of seeking help within their community.
- **Prepare for negative or ignorant feedback:** Some people know little to nothing about mental health or how to support someone who is struggling with their mental health. Between media misrepresentations and the secrecy that surrounds disclosing mental health status, someone can go most of their lives without understanding the impact that mental health plays in one's life.
- **Build a strong circle of people that will support you:** After you have identified who you want to share your mental health with, if your "gut-feeling" is that those people will be supportive, add them to your circle. Your circle of support does not have to be large. Your circle of support are the people that you can rely on and call upon in times of need.
- **People in your circle of support are also those that will stand up for you when it is necessary:** Many people, especially those that are marginalized experience multiple barriers when they are trying to deal with their mental health challenges. Having someone who can support and advocate for you when you face obstacles is absolutely necessary on your quest to achieve mental wellness.