

Questions to Consider Before Telling Others

This worksheet can help you assess what you do and don't want to tell—and when.

1. Who are you thinking of telling?

2A. Is it safe to tell this person(s), or do you think their response may potentially be hostile?

2B. If it does not feel safe, do you think it would be physically or emotionally unsafe?

If you fear the person will be physically unsafe, it's best not to put yourself in danger. Instead, seek support from others (a trusting friend or family member, therapist, or school counselor, for example). Confronting the perpetrator should be done with caution and isn't necessary to heal.

2C. If you answered emotionally unsafe, is there someone supportive you've told who could accompany you if you choose to tell this person?

3. What are you hoping will happen when you tell?

4. It's important that you only share the parts of the trauma that you want to share. You're not obligated to include concrete details. Which parts of your story do you feel safe to share with this person(s)?

5. What would you like to hear in response to your disclosure? What would you like to be done?

6. Consider letting this person know beforehand how you'd like them to respond (such as to simply listen, to ask or not ask you questions, to tell you it will be all right, to offer suggestions). How might you make this request?

7. Do you have any other requests for them (for example to advocate for you, to not tell others, to tell specific others)?

8. Where and when would it be most comfortable for you to tell them?

9. What self-care steps can you take before and after the conversation, especially if your needs and expectations are not met (examples include: talk to a trusted friend or relative, write in a journal, do “Self-Compassion Steps,” let yourself be with your emotions without judging them)?

Another great resource from RAINN is the “Friends and Family Toolkit for Supporting a Loved One After Sexual Violence,” which you can find at <https://rainn.org/sites/default/files/Toolkit.pdf>. It includes suggestions on what to say to a survivor and on how to be a supportive ally. You might look it over and consider sharing it, or parts of it, with those you choose to tell.