

Telling someone about my eating disorder

Once you have admitted to yourself that you have an eating disorder, you are faced with another step: to seek support. Telling someone can be very difficult, especially for the first time. Possibly, you may also feel afraid of the person's reaction. Below are some suggestions and things to consider when you are facing the prospect of sharing your concerns with someone else.

Things to consider

Although we can never predict someone else's behaviour, we can spend hours wondering how they may react when we tell them. Often we think of a negative scenario, to prepare ourselves for the worst.

However, the only way we are ever going to know how someone will react is if we take the risk to tell them. It can be useful to remind yourself of the benefits of telling someone, such as getting support and not having to hide a secret anymore.

Consider who you would like to tell. It may be a friend, a family doctor, a family member, or a partner. If you are a young person, perhaps think about telling a teacher or a youth worker that you feel you can trust or are comfortable with.

People will have varying reactions; some may be surprised, uncomfortable, confused, or worried. Others may be angry, scared and unsure of what to say. Some may have seen the signs and are relieved you have told them.

Remind yourself that they may need a few days to deal with their own feelings and reactions. If you have a negative experience telling someone, it is important that you don't let this stop you from getting the professional help and support that you need. Consider who else you may tell, such as a friend, family member or professional.

Some suggestions that may be useful when telling someone

If you are concerned about telling someone such as your family, you may like to have a friend or someone else with you.

Phone an anonymous or confidential service, such as the EDV Helpline (1300 500 236). This can be useful to practise the words you may use, and also to see how it feels to tell someone else aloud.

Think about the time and place that you will have your chat. Try to choose a time when they are not stressed or preoccupied.

If the idea of talking to someone is too uncomfortable for you, consider putting your concerns in a letter or email. That way you will not forget anything you want to say, and the other person will also have some private time to digest what you are telling them.

Prepare yourself for their emotional reaction.

Plan how you would like to respond if the person does not accept what you are saying, or becomes upset. What would you like to say to them? What would you like to do?

Remind yourself that you are only responsible for your own thoughts, feelings and actions. You are not responsible for other people's reactions.

Remind yourself that you have taken a positive first step by telling someone, regardless of their reaction.

Give the person some information, or some phone numbers of relevant organisations. EDV is happy to send you leaflets that you may pass on to family and friends.

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Remind yourself that...

While no one can walk the pathway to recovery for you, it is important to remind yourself that you do not have to walk this path alone.

Support and understanding from those around you can be a powerful tool in recovery, especially because living with an eating disorder can be so isolating.

Opening up and sharing the journey with those who care about you, will help you to break free from this isolation. The process of talking about your eating disorder with someone is often a valuable way to find out who will be your support network through your recovery journey.

Ultimately you will discover that the benefits you get from opening up to people who can provide you with the positive support you deserve, far outweighs the loneliness, isolation and shame that are often experienced with an eating disorder.

How we can help

EDV have a number of services which you may find useful in your journey towards recovery.

The Eating Disorders Helpline is a first point of call for anyone who has a worry about an eating disorder or a related issue. Call 1300 550 236, email help@eatingdisorders.org.au or drop in to EDV at the Collingwood Football Club Community Centre, corner of Lulie and Abbot streets, Abbotsford, Vic.

EDV Psychology offers private psychology sessions for individuals with an eating disorder and friends and family who are supporting a loved one.

We also run a range of Support Groups across Victoria, for people with an eating disorder as well as their friends and family.

More information on all of our services can be found on our website at www.eatingdisorders.org.au

