



A Roadmap for the Newly Diagnosed

Deciding If, When, and How to Talk About Multiple Sclerosis with Others

Whether or not you decide to share your diagnosis with others is a personal decision. It is entirely up to you – there is no expectation. You may need to take time to process your feelings. Know that you don't need to provide all of the answers when you're ready to share.¹

If you do decide to share your diagnosis, there is no right or wrong time, but it can help if you establish boundaries. Seeking help from your doctor, a social worker, or your religious leader may help you with what to say.²

Consider asking yourself these three questions:

1. Why do I want this person to know I have MS?
2. What is important for them to understand about MS?
3. What response do I hope to get?

It can be helpful to start with telling those closest to you. Here are a few phrases you may consider using.

“ Here is what MS is and this is how it affects me. ”

“ This is how you could help me... ”

“ Please let me be the one to tell other people. ”



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Handling Complicated Conversations

Sometimes people don't know what to say or they say things that are not helpful. They may be unintentionally hurtful, and this can be hard.³

Additional responses that can help:

“ Thank you for asking, but I'd rather not talk about it right now. ”

“ Usually I am okay to talk about things like this, but today I just can't handle it. I'm sure you understand. ”

“ I'd prefer to not go into details. ”

“ I appreciate your concern, but I'm trying to stay away from negative conversation. ”



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Remember:

Be thoughtful about who you tell and when you tell them.

- ✓ Trust your instincts
- ✓ Choose the right time to share
- ✓ Be prepared to explain what MS is
- ✓ Expect the unexpected

Deciding whether or not to share an MS diagnosis with loved ones is a personal decision. Use the space below to reflect on sharing (or not sharing) with others:

References

1. Telling People. Multiple Sclerosis Trust. Updated June 2018. Accessed August 2021. <https://mstrust.org.uk/about-ms/newly-diagnosed/telling-people>
2. Daron SL. Telling Others About Your Cancer Diagnosis. Rogell Cancer Center, University of Michigan Medicine. Accessed August 2021. <https://www.rogelcancercenter.org/living-with-cancer/caregivers-and-family/telling-others-about-your-cancer-diagnosis>
3. Cafasso J, Hammond N, reviewers. How to Talk to Others About Your MS Diagnosis. Healthline. January 2, 2020. Accessed August 2021. <https://www.healthline.com/health/multiple-sclerosis/talking-about-diagnosis>