

Taking Care of You

Telling Your Story & Tolerating Distress

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Telling your story to a lawyer, social worker or to the Royal Commission itself is not an easy task. For some people, this may be the first time you have disclosed the details of what happened to you. Even if you have told your story before and/or undertaken intensive therapy, considering making a submission to the Royal Commission is a big deal.

It is possible to experience a broad range of responses even if you feel very prepared. Many people are tearful, many feel angry, many experience feelings of shame, and many experience different levels of fear. Some people shut down or dissociate when they become overwhelmed (*hypoarousal*). Others become very agitated (*hyperarousal*).

It is also common to experience strong sensations in the body – pain, nausea, churning. These are all entirely normal human responses to remembering and disclosing traumatic experiences. It is realistic to expect at least some of these feelings to cause you distress before, during and after sharing your story. People can be particularly vulnerable afterwards.

Your number one priority must be your own safety.

Here are some tips to help you prioritise your safety and to tolerate and manage distress.

Before Sharing Your Story

- Prepare by making a self-care plan for afterwards.
- Note phone numbers of crisis and support services and have them handy - some are listed on the following page.
- Ask someone you trust (friend, family member, therapist, worker) to be available to support you afterwards. You might also share your self-care plan with that person.



While Sharing Your Story

- Share your story at your own pace: take breaks when you need to.
- Be kind to your nervous system: drink water and breathe deeply from time to time.
- Keep reconnecting yourself to the present moment: feel your body in your chair, focus on your breath, notice the colours or shapes around you, feel into your feet connecting with the floor.

After Sharing Your Story

- Be mindful that you are likely to feel quite vulnerable. Don't minimise or dismiss this.
- Contact your support person – even if you don't feel like doing so.
- Do the activities on your self-care plan. Ask your support person for help if you're having trouble.
- If you feel overwhelmed, call the crisis or support services noted in your plan.

CRISIS & SUPPORT SERVICES

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467

Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA): 1300 657 380 www.asca.org.au

Mensline: 1300 789 978

Kids Helpline: 1800 629 354

CONTACT US

knowmore is an independent legal service giving free legal assistance to people who are considering telling their story or providing information to the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

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