

## MONTH 6: JUNE

### Talking to People You Trust: Gentle Guidance for Difficult Conversations

Word Count: ~750-850 words

*[Content Warning: This article discusses clergy sexual abuse and related topics. Please take care of yourself as you read. You can stop anytime.]*

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One of the hardest decisions after experiencing clergy sexual abuse is whether to tell someone in your life what happened. Maybe you're wondering: • Should I tell my partner? • How do I explain this to my family? • What if they don't understand? • What if they blame me? These concerns make sense. Telling someone makes it real in a new way. And you can't control how they'll respond. Let me offer some gentle guidance — not rules, just suggestions.

#### FIRST: YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ANYONE

Disclosure is your choice. You don't owe anyone your story. You can keep this private as long as you need to (or forever). Some survivors find healing in sharing. Others find healing in privacy. Both are valid.

#### IF YOU'RE CONSIDERING TELLING SOMEONE

Questions that might help: • Do you feel safe with this person? • Have they shown they can handle difficult conversations? • Do you trust them to keep this confidential? • Are they able to support you without making it about them? • What do you hope to gain from telling them?

#### PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION

If you decide to tell someone: \*\*Choose the right time and place\*\* • Private, quiet, won't be interrupted • When neither is stressed or rushed • When you feel emotionally stable \*\*Decide what to share\*\* • You don't have to share everything • Start with basics, share more as comfortable • Keep certain things private even from trusted people \*\*Know what you need\*\* • Just listening? • Help making decisions? • Emotional support? • Practical assistance?

## POSSIBLE REACTIONS

**\*\*If they don't understand the power dynamic:\*\*** "Clergy hold power similar to therapists. The imbalance makes equal consent very difficult." **\*\*If they ask why you didn't tell sooner:\*\*** "I needed time to process first. This isn't about not trusting you." **\*\*If they want to confront the abuser:\*\*** "I understand you're angry. But what I need right now is support, not action. Let me decide how to handle this." **\*\*If they blame you:\*\*** This is hardest. You might need to end the conversation and reconsider whether this person can support you.

## IF THE CONVERSATION DOESN'T GO WELL

Please know: • Their reaction says more about them than you • You deserved a better response • This doesn't mean what happened wasn't real • You can find support elsewhere Some people can't hold space for this truth. That's their limitation, not yours.

## WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT READY

If you're not ready to tell anyone in your personal life, that's okay. You can: • Work with a therapist • Connect with survivor support groups • Call a crisis hotline • Write privately Healing doesn't require disclosure to loved ones.

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RESOURCES: Crisis support: RAINN: 1-800-656-4673 | Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741  
Information: | Faith Trust Institute: [faithtrustinstitute.org](http://faithtrustinstitute.org) You are not responsible for what happened to you. You deserve support, whatever you decide. Take care of yourself. ❤️