

Disclosing Sibling Abuse: A Guide for Survivors

Seeking Clarity and Courage

If you've lived through sibling abuse and are considering disclosure, I want to say this first: you're not alone. (Approximately 40% of all child abuse is perpetrated by a sibling.) You are not overreacting, exaggerating, or being "too sensitive." What happened to you matters. The pain you carry is real—and so is your strength.

Disclosing isn't easy. Sharing your truth carries the risk of triggering old emotional wounds within you or potentially encountering resistance, hostility, or even abandonment from others. This process may unearth profound personal questions that you never expected to confront. That's why preparing a safe and empowering frame around your disclosure is so important.

This guide will **prepare** you by walking through the key emotional and practical steps that are best to consider before any disclosure.

- ✓ Denial Is Common—But Your Truth Is Yours
Most perpetrators deny their actions. Studies suggest up to 97% will. Your sibling(s) will probably be among them. That denial doesn't undo your experience. You deserve to name what happened—even if no one else affirms it.
- ✓ Families Don't Always Protect the Victim
Some survivors discover that their parents or relatives side with the abuser. This painful reality does not reflect your value or the truth. **Their inability to face the truth is not a measure of your worth nor your veracity.**
- ✓ Support Systems Are Lifelines
Ensure you have safe people ready to hold space for you—a therapist, friend, or online support group can be a valuable resource. Emotions may surge: grief, rage, confusion. Let them find you prepared and held.
- ✓ Boundaries Are Protective, Not Punitive
If conversations trigger trauma, it's okay to go No Contact temporarily—or longer. You are allowed to protect your peace. Healthy boundaries are an act of love for yourself. People need to show they're "safe."
- ✓ Navigating Cognitive Dissonance
That tension is real—and hard. Use grounding practices (journaling, therapy, meditation) to stay rooted in your memories even if they're fragmented. People often struggle with the fact that the person who hurt them was also the person who showed them kindness.



It may help to create a “sober list” where you write down the things you went through, naming them. Reviewing this regularly helps solidify that what you experienced is true, it indeed happened, and it explains your current struggles.

- ✓ **Guilt-Tripping May Come From Ignorance**
Comments like “They’ve changed” or “Don’t tear the family apart” may arise. These often come from people who don’t understand the damage that comes from sibling abuse or trauma. **You have a choice.** You can choose what to absorb—and what to release.
- ✓ **Spirituality Can Be a Sanctuary**
If prayer or connection to God offers comfort, lean into it. But if your faith was damaged by abuse, or if they spiritually traumatized you, healing can utilize other strategies—like nature, music, art, or quiet reflection. Your path to peace is your own.
- ✓ **Explore What Justice Looks Like to You**
Justice may mean legal action. Or it may mean reclaiming your joy, cutting ties, or having one person truly hear you. Ask yourself:
 - What outcome would support my healing right now?
 - Am I looking for accountability, distance, validation—or something else?
 - What am I able to handle right now?There is no wrong answer – only your answer.
- ✓ **Create a Frame for Your Disclosure**
Before you speak, consider what outcome you are seeking. Is it connection, release, clarity, closure, restitution? Framing your intentions can bring calm—even if the response disappoints.
Try journaling:
 - What do I want/need this person to understand?
 - What will make me feel emotionally safe?
 - How can I care for myself afterward?

You Are Brave

Just thinking about disclosure is brave. Speaking it aloud is courageous. Protecting your truth is revolutionary.

However it unfolds, remember this:

- *Your story matters.*
- *You matter.*
- *You are not alone.*

