

# Talking to your loved ones - Kōrero ki tō whānau

*'Telling my friends was the hardest. I was worried they would be upset, and they were. But I still wanted to hang out. I didn't want everything to be about me getting sick.'*

Young person

Sharing the news about your health can be challenging, especially when sharing it with your friends and whānau. Remember that your loved ones care about you and will want to support you in coping with any feelings of sadness, anxiety, or uncertainty that you may be experiencing.

**Tip**

**Your privacy is important.**

Be clear about what people can share with others so you have a sense of control over your own experience.

## Here are some tips to help you:

### Take the time you need

Give yourself time to digest things first. If telling people immediately feels overwhelming, don't put pressure on yourself to rush.

### Get more info

It's natural for people to ask questions, but it can feel overwhelming if you haven't had the chance to ask your healthcare team questions yourself. Before answering other people's questions, ensure you have the information you need. And remember that you are your 'boss'. It's your information - you can choose how much information you want to share with those around you.

### Consider how you want to communicate

You may want to tell some people face to face and some in other ways, like a chat group or on social media. Alternatively, you may prefer for a member of your whānau to manage some of your communications for you.



### Seek support

It can be helpful to talk to a trained professional like a counsellor, youth worker, or psychologist. These professionals have the skills to create a safe space for you to open up and can assist you in figuring out what to say to others.

Ask your healthcare team to help direct you, or check out the supports listed on page 33.

### Be yourself

You might feel like others expect you to behave or speak a certain way or that you need to 'put on a brave face'. However, don't be afraid to continue acting or talking in your natural way. For instance, if you use humour to diffuse challenging situations, there's no need to suddenly become serious.

### Silence is okay

When you speak to people, you don't have to make it better for everyone by filling up the space with words. Silence is a great opportunity for everyone to let some emotion out and breathe.

### Expect people to react

Some of your friends or whānau will be shocked, some may have questions, and some might break down. You may find yourself comforting them, even though you're the one who is impacted the most. Acknowledge that it's hard to talk about for both you and them. Remember, it's okay to let your feelings out.

### Talking isn't the only way to feel connected

If you don't want to chat but would like a hug or to hang out instead, let people know. Sometimes, a hug, holding hands, or even just sitting with someone for a while can be comforting.

### Let people know there is support available for them

Ask your healthcare team what services are available for your friends and whānau so you can encourage them to access support. A number of supports for whānau can also be found by following the link to our directory on page 30.

### Remember self-care

Sharing difficult news and managing your own and others' distress is hard. Make sure you take some time to care for yourself. Check out the wellbeing resources on page 7.

### Tip

Remind your friends and whānau that just because your health is changing doesn't mean it's all doom and gloom. You're the same person, and you're still going to want to hang out with your mates and laugh at times.

***'I think you just need to tell your friends how you feel as they are not going to know unless you tell them. If you're feeling down and are over life at that moment, they can help you. They're there because they want to be.'***

*Young person*

