



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



FAMILY
OLDER ADULTS

We Tell Each Other the Truth! Clear, Consistent Messages

It can be hard to share emotions while social distancing. When others are far from us, it can be difficult to truly open up and share how we feel. We may want to protect others from the worry of our emotions or hold in our emotions because they can be confusing. It is just as important to share our emotions now as it always has been. Social support networks continue to be important, especially while we spend more time apart. Sharing our emotions is important when everyday life has its own unique challenges. There are different ways to share emotions. One way is through storytelling.

Storytelling

There are many benefits of storytelling. Telling stories can help us to connect and engage with others through our emotions. There are several psychological reasons why stories are so powerful:

- Stories are a form of communication - they connect us to traditions, legends, myths and symbols
- Stories engage us through emotions as we collaborate and connect
- Stories help us to make meaning of life
- Stories can withstand intense emotions because there is resolution
- Stories create genuine emotions, the sense of being somewhere, and behavioral responses
- Stories engage our imagination

[Material adapted from The Psychological Power of Storytelling](#)

Storytelling Activities

When telling stories, consider sharing memories from your childhood or past. You may wish to focus on how you overcame grief or loss or on your accomplishments. Sharing these messages can help you to focus on how you dealt with different emotions in the past. Sharing current stories can also help frame positive thoughts and emotions.

- **Writing blogs.** Create an online blog page and encourage family members to share their feelings and concerns. You may wish to use a free blogging site such as [WordPress](#).
- **Writing a poem or song.** Writing a poem or song can be a helpful way to express emotions while telling a story. If you are interested in how to use poems and songs to communicate emotions, consider reading articles by [The National Writing Project](#) or [Psychology Today](#).
- **Consider using prompts.** When sharing stories out loud, you may wish to consider prompts such as “What was challenging?” or “How did you overcome it?”
- **Using art.** Photographs, paintings, drawings, sculpture, and beadwork are all wonderful ways to express emotions and tell stories through art. [The PBS Metrofocus Storytelling Through Art video gives an example of how different kinds of art can tell a story.](#)
- **Share stories virtually.** Consider virtually sharing happy memories and times you overcame challenges when talking to family members and friends. Discuss the emotions felt and how they may have changed over time.

To learn more about the science behind the benefits of storytelling as a way to share emotions, you may wish to read the below research:

- [The Role of Social Media for Collective Behavior Development in Response to Natural Disasters](#)
- [Effects of Storytelling on Emotional Development](#). While this research paper focuses on researching preschoolers' ability to regulate emotions through the use of storytelling, the paper also provides an overview of stories across generations and their importance among families and communities.