

## How Self-Disclosure Can Benefit You

Self-disclosure is the revealing of personal facts, feelings, and opinions to others. It can be as simple and easy as revealing your birthday to a fellow astrology buff or as complex and scary as sharing sexual fantasies with a new lover.

Self-disclosure is not really optional. You can't help disclosing things about yourself. Even if you ignore those around you, your silence communicates itself to them. Your clothes, grooming, posture, and gestures say something about you before you even open your mouth to speak.

Revealing yourself is often difficult. You may hold back because others might disapprove of you or disagree with your most cherished beliefs. Someone might laugh or leave or say no. Sometimes it doesn't feel appropriate to talk a lot about yourself, to toot your own horn, or to monopolize the conversation.

People who disclose more about themselves tend to be happier, more confident, and more successful.

- **Reciprocal communication.** Disclosure breeds disclosure. As you open up to others, they in turn open up to you. Communication improves because there are more personal and significant topics on the table. What you say and what is said to you is more interesting, more profound, and more satisfying to reveal and hear.
- **Increased self-knowledge and self-esteem.** As you explain yourself to others, you grow in self-knowledge. The process of putting your thoughts, fears, and feelings into words sharpens your internal picture of yourself. What has been vague and contradictory becomes more sharply defined and delineated. As you know yourself better, you tend to like or esteem yourself more.
- **Deeper intimacy.** When partners in a close relationship withhold large parts of themselves, the relationship is shallow and unsatisfying. As you reveal more and more of yourself, your partner opens up as well, and you both reap the benefits of an more intense, satisfying relationship.
- **Increased energy.** Nothing is more deadening than a secret that weighs on your mind. It takes energy to withhold important information about yourself. When you are harboring a secret from those around you, you feel tired and stressed all the time. When you finally reveal the secret, a great psychic load is lifted from your spirit and you feel a rush of relief and renewed energy.
- **Relief from guilt and shame.** Disclosure can relieve guilt by lifting the burden of secrecy. Revealing something of which you are ashamed is a spiritual experience of confession and often absolution as well. Others are rarely as harsh in their judgments as you have been in the court of your own mind. They are usually more inclined to forgive you than you are to forgive yourself.