

a relationship. Consider a scenario like this, where the incompatible wants and needs of each person become clear through disclosure:

A: Let's get together with Wes and Joanne on Saturday night.

B: To tell you the truth, I'm tired of seeing Wes and Joanne. I don't have much fun with them, and I think Wes is kind of a jerk.

A: But they're my best friends!

Loss of Influence Another risk of disclosure is a potential loss of influence in the relationship. Once you confess a secret weakness, your control over how the other person views you can be diminished.

A: I'm sorry I was so sarcastic. Sometimes I build myself up by putting you down.

B: Is that it? I'll never let you get away with that again!

Loss of Control Revealing something personal about yourself means losing control of the information. What might happen if the person tells others what you disclosed, people you prefer not know, or who you would like to tell yourself?

A: I never really liked Leslie. I agreed to go out because it meant a good meal in a nice restaurant.

B: Really? Leslie would sure like to know that!

Hurt the Other Person Even if revealing hidden information leaves you feeling better, it might hurt others—cause them to be upset, for example. It's probably easy to imagine yourself in a situation like this:

A: Well, since you asked, I have felt less attracted to you lately. I know you can't help it when your skin breaks out, but it is kind of a turnoff.

B: I know! I don't see how you can stand me at all!

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure is a special kind of sharing that is not appropriate for every situation. Let's take a look at some guidelines that can help you recognize how to express yourself in a way that's rewarding for you and for the others involved (Greene et al., 2006).

Is the Other Person Important to You? There are several ways in which someone might be important. Perhaps you have an ongoing relationship deep enough so that sharing significant parts of yourself justifies keeping your present level of togetherness intact. Perhaps the person to whom you're considering disclosing is someone with whom you've previously

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