



Telling Your Story: A Step-by-Step Worksheet

People have been telling stories since human beings first sat around campfires. We are hard-wired to take in new information through stories. Statistics reach people in the head. Stories hit people in the heart. Sharing your personal experience is a powerful way to establish a connection and drive your listener to action. Your audience (e.g. elected officials, donors, the media, other volunteers) may disagree with your facts or arguments, but they cannot argue with your unique personal experience. The steps below are based on research in effective storytelling, but you should tailor them to your own circumstances.

1. Hi. I'm [name] from [place].

If meeting with a member of Congress, identify yourself as living in their district.

2. My life changed when [describe your diagnosis or a loved one's].

Example: I had to undergo multiple surgeries and rounds of chemotherapy, which took a physical and mental toll on me. Despite having a good relationship with my doctors, it was difficult to coordinate my care between them, leading to confusion and frustration.

Example: As my father's primary caregiver when he was diagnosed with cancer, I had to navigate a complex health care system that I knew little about. I was constantly worried about whether I was making the right decisions for his care and felt like I had to advocate for him at every turn.

3. Fortunately, [describe the intervention you received].

Example: I received a survivorship care plan at the end of my treatment, which helped me understand the long-term effects I may experience and how I could reduce the risk of the cancer returning.

Example: I had a supportive network of friends and family who helped me through the process. They helped by driving me to appointments and taking care of my kids while I was in treatment. Without their help, I don't know how I would have managed.

4. It would have been easier if [describe the obstacle to quality care you faced, preferably one addressed by the CCSA or CCPCA].

Example: My cancer care experience could have been better if I had access to cancer care planning and coordination services. Without these services, I struggled to coordinate my care between multiple doctors and often felt lost in the process.

5. I am not alone. There are 18.1 million Americans just like me.

Example: Today, I am a cancer survivor who is passionate about helping other survivors access the care and support they need. Others, just like me, would benefit from receiving a cancer care plan and having coordination of their cancer care.

Example: Today, I am a cancer survivor who is grateful for the care and treatment I received, but I know there is still much to be learned about late and long-term effects. An adult cancer survivorship study would provide important data and insights to help survivors and their health care providers make informed decisions about their care. By supporting this study, we can help ensure that future survivors have access to the best possible care.

6. Can you help by co-sponsoring the Comprehensive Cancer Survivorship Act and the Care Planning and Communications Act? These bill aims to improve survivorship, treatment, and transition by addressing the entire continuum of care to close many of the gaps that cancer survivors face and provide cancer survivors with a roadmap for their treatment and post-treatment care.

Next, practice telling your story. Time it and try to keep it under two minutes. Hang onto the details that are vivid and memorable. Omit the content that is unnecessary or distracting. Ask for feedback from friends and other volunteers. With practice, you will be able to shake your nervousness but keep your energy and passion.