



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 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. This worksheet is intended to help you hone your story to a short “elevator pitch” and connect it with the policy ask for Hill Day.

1. Hi. I’m [name] from [place].

If meeting with a member of Congress, identify yourself as a constituent who lives in their district.

2. My life changed when [describe your diagnosis or a loved one’s or your work in health care].

Example: I had to undergo multiple surgeries and rounds of chemotherapy, which took a physical and mental toll on me. I had to continue working during my treatment in order to keep my health insurance.

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, while I continued to work and care for my children.

Example: I entered medical school and learned about the challenges cancer patients face during their treatment, including the huge financial burden cancer causes survivors and their families.

3. Fortunately, [describe the support you had, including health insurance, support networks, novel treatments, and clinical trials].

Example: I had health insurance that covered my treatments, but I still had out-of-pocket costs and continue to have health care needs 10 years after my treatment. The financial burden, even with good insurance, left a lasting impact.

Example: I benefited from advances in cancer research and had options for my treatments. I participated in a clinical trial and had access to the latest treatments. Without cancer research and advances in treatments, I would not be here today.

4. I am not alone. There are more than 18 million Americans cancer survivors in the U.S.

Example: Today, I am a cancer survivor who is passionate about helping other survivors access the care and support they need. Everyone deserves access to health care, like I had, especially when they have been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease like cancer.

Example: Today, I am a cancer survivor who is grateful for the care and treatment I received. More than 600,000 Americans will die from cancer this year. We can't let up on the medical research that has allowed me and millions of others to survive cancer, and we need to find more treatments so that families do not have to lose loved ones to cancer.

5. We need your help to ensure people have access to health insurance and life-saving cancer research. Please vote NO on any bill that cuts Medicaid or cancer research. [Add any other comments about your own experience that bolster the case for Medicaid and cancer research.]

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 advocates. With practice, you will be able to shake your nervousness and keep your energy and passion.