



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 below steps 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 Congress Member, identify yourself as living in their district.

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

Example: A free mammography screening van came to my work one day.

Example: My sister was having headaches and didn't know why. It turned out to be a brain tumor.

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

Example: Fortunately, my insurance plan covered almost everything.

Example: I was out of work and didn't have insurance. Luckily, the nurse at the hospital signed me up for Medicaid.

4. Where I am today.

Example: I just celebrated five years of survivorship.

Example: My husband would be alive today if he had had health insurance.

5. I am not alone. There are millions of people like me.

Example: I had employer-sponsored health insurance and was able to afford my co-pays and deductibles, but that's not the case for many people. Everyone should have affordable health insurance that covers cancer treatment.

Example: I feel lucky to be alive, but now I am worried that my cancer treatment will be considered a pre-existing condition and I won't be able to keep affordable health insurance. There are nearly 16 million cancer survivors like me.

6. Can you help by [state the call to action].

Example: Will you support the Cancer Care Planning and Communications Act?

Example: Will you support continuation of the ACA protections for people with pre-existing conditions?

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.