

Seven Steps to Telling Your Story

1. **Introduce yourself.** Describe who you are and why you are speaking or writing. Knowing your name and where you live helps legislators remember you and feel connected. Complete the following sentence or write your own.
I'm (name) and I'm from (county or city).

2. **Let your legislator or committee members know what you are advocating for.** If possible, name a specific bill. Complete the following sentence or write your own.
I'm (writing or here today) to ask for your support of mental health care.

3. **Let your legislator or committee members know that you are affected by mental illness.** This gives a "real face" to mental illness and recovery. Complete the following sentence or write your own.
I (live with or am a parent of a child or have a relative/friend with or work with people who live with) mental illness.

4. **Tell your story.** To tell your story effectively, answer the following questions in a few sentences:
- **What happened?**
 - **What helped?**
 - **How are you different today?**

What happened before you got the help you needed? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **Before I/my (child's, partner's, parent's, client's, etc.) recovery, I/we went through some (challenging, difficult, dark) times. I/we ... (felt hopeless, was in and out of hospitals, didn't have a place to live, was in jail, etc.).**
b. **Before I/we got the help I/we needed, I/we... (see above for examples).**

What helped? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **The/My (program name or therapist, doctor, ACT team, case manager, peer support specialist, etc. [name one or two]) has/have made a big difference in my life.**
b. **The support I get from my (name of program or professional/staff) has helped me manage my (main diagnosis or "mental health condition").**

How are you different today? What is going right in your life? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **Today, I am... (e.g., a peer support specialist; working part time; living on my own; doing much better; hopeful, staying out of jail/hospital, etc.).**
b. **Today, I'm proud of the fact that ... (e.g., I'm living in a group home and not the state hospital; starting to work; doing well; feeling like my life has meaning; I am telling my story; my daughter is experiencing recovery, etc.).**

5. **Make your point.** Help others by giving a brief, positive message about mental health services and recovery. Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.
- a. **Mental health services are an investment in recovery. I'm living proof.**
b. **Mental illness is common and recovery is possible.**
c. **Many people have mental illnesses like mine. With mental health services, people can experience recovery.**

6. **Make your "ask."** Let your legislator or committee members know the action or position you would like them to take. Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.
- a. **Give people the hope of recovery by preserving mental health services.**
b. **Please reject cuts to mental health services.**
c. **A vote for mental health care is a vote for recovery.**

7. **Say thank you.** Always thank your legislator or committee members for their time. (Optional) Let them know that you would like to serve as a resource on mental health issues.