

5 Tips for responding to a request for your story

These are tips for patients and caregivers who are asked to share their story or experiences in either an informal group setting or a formal speaking environment.

1. Reflect on your experiences

Are you ready to share your story emotionally? Ask yourself – am I too angry, too anguished to see what can be learned from my experience – if so, maybe it is too soon. Feel free to decline.

Can you pick out the key learning points from your experiences ? Do you know what went right, what went wrong and how it might have gone better? Can you learn more about what happened by talking with those involved or by doing some research? Provide yourself with the most robust understanding of your experiences.

2. Identify which stories you have

Within your experiences you may have more than one story. What are they? Can you pick them out based on key learning points? How long are each of your stories? How complex? Can you simplify them to make your points?

3. Get the practical information about audience, timing and format

Who is your audience and how many? Are you on a panel with others? Are you a key note at a podium with a microphone? Or kicking off a meeting? Is someone going to ask you in the middle of a meeting as you sit around a table?

How long do you have to tell your story? Do you need to have slides to support your story? What slide format or size? Do you need to send slides in advance? Will there be questions? Are you comfortable with the technology from microphones to webinar software?

4. Select your story to fit the purpose

Why are you being asked to tell your story? Who will be listening to it? What is the goal of the event or group?

What do you want them to learn from your story? What do you want them to change based on your experience?

Learn about and understand the context and audience to make the most impact.

5. Prepare and practice in advance

Write out your story for the timeframe making sure that you are clear about the 1-3 points you want the audience to take away. Three points is the maximum people can remember to take away.

Practice until you are comfortable and have nailed the phrases you want and have the timing down. Make sure you breathe and build in pauses so the audience can absorb. Being prepared does not take away from the authenticity of your experience and insights; it may enable you to make a stronger impact.