

Patient Storytelling

Tips and Best Practices



Preparing for the Event

 **Create your introduction.** Share details about your professional background, involvement in volunteering or community activities, and some personal interests—such as family, pets or hobbies.

 **Confirm the following** with your main point of contact:

Logistics

-  Whether the event is confidential.
-  Whether the event will be recorded and whether the recording and slides will be shared.
-  Whether you will be compensated for your travel.
-  If they can provide a signal about timing during your presentation (if desired).

Content

-  Discuss the event audience with your main contact, identifying who will attend and deciding which pieces of your story should be emphasized.
-  Confirm specific details the organizer would like to include in developing and refining your story.

 **Prepare note cards** or an outline that documents key points of the story to reference during your presentation.

 **Dedicate as much time to preparation** as you do to sharing your story at the event.

 **Be mindful of language** used in your story and provide a disclaimer if needed—members of the audience may have experienced trauma.

Crafting Your Story

1. **Connect with a previous patient speaker**, if possible. Ask the main contact if they can arrange a meeting with a past patient speaker, or set up a one-on-one meeting to help you craft your story.
2. **Provide context about your background** and the ways your previous experiences or circumstances influenced your health outcome. For example, note if your community, workplace or hospital primarily serves rural populations or communities with high socioeconomic status.
3. **Determine the time allotted** to tell your story. Allow 5-10 minutes for questions and comments.
4. **Align your story with pictures.** Any pictures you share should match the corresponding part of your narrative.
5. **Tell your story chronologically**, ensuring that each part of the story is covered in order without missing key components.
6. **It's okay to show emotion!** However, don't get too lost in emotion that you become incoherent or forget your message. Practice will help with this.

7. **Highlight the types of staff members involved in your care** (such as nurses, doctors and patient advocates). Describe whether and how staff communicated with you, how staff included or excluded your family/support team, etc.
8. **Do NOT share hospital, provider or nurse names.** We are not here to name and shame, but to encourage hospitals to do better for their patients. You can share that the hospital was in Maryland to emphasize that this happened locally.
9. **Discuss any lasting effects**, such as psychological trauma, insights gained upon reflection, how you wish hospital staff had treated you and/or your expectation for future pregnancies and deliveries.
10. **End your story with a message** tailored to the audience and purpose of the event. This could include emphasizing gaps in care, motivating mothers and families, and more.
11. **Practice your story ahead of time** with your main contact, family members or others. Rehearsing helps you stay focused, cover key points and finish within the time frame.

Sample Outline

- 1 **Thank the organizer** for having you and giving you an opportunity to share your story.
- 2 **Introduce yourself and your background.** How many children do you have, and which child is the story about?
- 3 **Discuss your pre-delivery background.** Mention anything significant that happened during prenatal care and any relevant conditions you had.
- 4 **What was your delivery experience?** Did you have a support person? Did anything go wrong? Did anything go right?
- 5 **What was your post-birth experience?** Did anything significant happen after giving birth in the hospital? Did anything happen after going home?
- 6 **What was the outcome?** Was your overall birth experience what you wanted, and why/why not? Did you have any lasting effects?
- 7 **Share a message** or any lessons learned.
- 8 **Thank the audience** for listening and ask if there are any questions.

Resources

- [Momma's Voices](#)
- [March of Dimes](#)
- [Patient Storytelling with Debora Grandison](#)
- [AMETHIST@Penn October 2024 Seminar - Connecting, Collaborating and Contributing for Change: Part 2](#)
- [Example Patient Story at MDPQC Annual Meeting](#)

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