



## Seven Steps to Telling Your Story

The following seven steps will help you craft a succinct and powerful story.

**Your assignment:** In your group, agree on a topic for advocacy:

- More funding for school mental health counselors, psychologists, social workers
- Better access to mental health medications
- More walk-in centers where people can get immediate help
- Other

Each person in the group should take a question and develop an answer (depending on the size, you may have more than one question).

This is how a group would discuss an issue with a legislator during a meeting.

1.	<b>Introduce yourself</b>
	<b>Give your name and city or town.</b> Include your organization. We encourage you to describe yourself as “a member of [NAMI State Org or NAMI Affiliate], part of America’s largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.”
	<b>Share how you are affected by mental illness.</b> Are you living with mental illness, a family member, a caregiver? This brings a "real face" to mental illness.
	<b>State your issue and position.</b> Let your listener know what you want them to support or oppose (or do). This helps your listener focus.
2.	<b>What happened?</b>
	<b>What happened before you received the help you needed?</b> Keep this brief--think about the most important thing you’d like your listener to know.
3.	<b>What helped?</b>
	<b>Describe what helped in your recovery (or would have helped).</b> This adds a hopeful tone and helps show the value of services and supports.
4.	<b>How are you different today?</b>
	<b>Share what is going right in your life or how you are experiencing recovery.</b> This concludes your personal story on a positive note that inspires.

5.	<b>What is the need or problem?</b>
	<b>Mention the problem or need you want addressed.</b> Transition to the challenge(s) faced by people living with mental illness.
6.	<b>What will help others?</b>
	<b>Talk about what will help.</b> Let your listener know what will address the need or problem you described.
7.	<b>Make your "ask"</b>
	<b>Ask your policymaker if you can count on their support (or opposition).</b> Include a bill number, if possible. Thank your policymaker for his or her time.

# Story Practice Sheet



<b>1. My introduction</b>	Include your name and city and organization, if applicable. We encourage you to describe yourself as “a member of [NAMI State Org or NAMI Affiliate], part of America’s largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.” Add how you are affected by mental illness and your issue and position.
<b>2. What happened</b>	Aim for 3-9 sentences. Briefly describe the most important and compelling thing(s) about your situation.
<b>3. What helped</b>	Aim for 1-5 sentences. Briefly describe what helped in your recovery (or what would have helped). Aim for a hopeful tone that helps show what is helpful.
<b>4. How I'm different</b>	Aim for 1-3 sentences. Share what is going right in your life or how you are experiencing recovery. This concludes your personal story on a positive note that inspires.

<b>5. What is the need or problem</b>	Aim for 1-2 sentences. Transition to the challenge(s) faced by people living with mental illness that you want addressed.
<b>6. What will help others</b>	Aim for 1-2 sentences. Talk about what will help. Let your listener know what will address the need or problem you described.
<b>7. My "ask"</b>	Aim for 1-2 sentences. Thank your listener for listening to you. Then, ask your listener for a commitment. Be specific.