

Storytelling for Advocacy: How to Tell Your Story

Storytelling is a powerful tool for advocacy. Stories have the power to persuade and move people to action—and are 22 times more memorable than facts alone!

As a parent of a child with complex medical needs, you're already an expert advocate. But a structure to the stories you tell can help you tell more effective stories while protecting your own energy in doing so—whether you're advocating to a policymaker, a health care provider, educator, or someone else in your community.

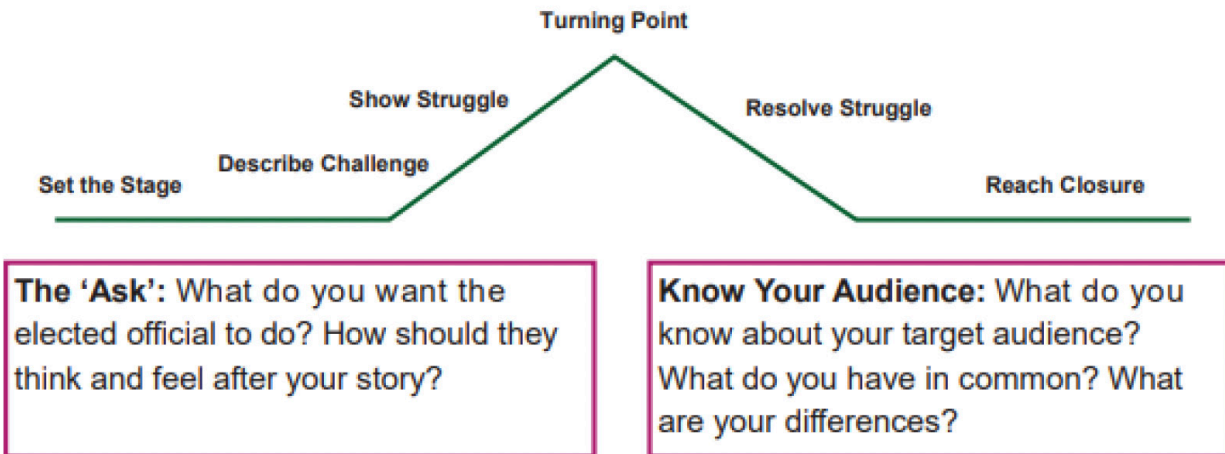
We all have stories to tell. And your story can be more effective if you choose one that resonates most with your audience. When considering a story, keep in mind two key components that compel others to listen and take action:

- **The "Ask":** Let your audience know why you are telling them this story and what you want from them. Be clear, concise, and confident.
- **Know Your Audience:** Be familiar with who you are speaking to. Choose the part of your story that you share based on values or experiences you share with your audience. Consider the relevance and scope of your audience's influence—Is your audience able to meet your ask?

Tell an effective story! This can be done by following the template:

1. **Set the Stage:** Begin by introducing yourself and thinking outside your "title." What is your experience like? Lay the groundwork of your story, describing the setting and context, and establish the stakes.
2. **Describe the Challenge:** This is the main conflict that sets your story in motion and where you "hook" the audience. Give them the promise that your story is worth listening to.
3. **Convey the Struggle:** Try to be specific—think about the "battle" versus the war. What is the internal, physical, emotional, or philosophical problem you are facing? This can create tension and suspense and make your listener be more invested. Describe your struggles with vivid language, strong adjectives, and key details that captivate the audience.
4. **Highlight the Turning Point:** This is your moment of discovery or greatest tension that leads you toward resolution.
5. **Show Resolution:** Describe how the conflict has been resolved and tie up any loose ends. This doesn't mean that your struggles are over—just that this specific challenge has been resolved (even if it's without a happy ending).
6. **Reach Closure:** Leave them with a "punch." Reemphasize the importance of your story and include a reiteration of the "ask."

Adapted from a Worksheet from
the American Academy of
Nutrition and Dietetics



1. Set the Stage. Introduce Yourself and Your Story. Where does your story take place? Who is involved? What will happen if action is not taken?

2. Describe the Challenge: What do you feel? What did you see and experience? What did you hear?

3. Convey the Struggle: Appeal to emotions. How did the issue impact you personally? What roadblocks did you face?

4. Highlight the Turning Point: What's the "aha!" moment? How does this moment relate to your ask?

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5. Show resolution: How is the challenge resolved? Has anything changed?

6. Reach Closure: What is your main point? How is it related to your ask?

General Story Notes:

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the American Academy of
Nutrition and Dietetics