

Why Tell Stories?

Our brains are wired to remember stories. For most of human history, stories were the main way to pass along knowledge. As a result, our brains are set up to not just hear or listen to stories but to experience them along with the storyteller. Princeton University researcher, Uri Hasson, “by simply telling a story, the [teller] could plant ideas, thoughts and emotions into the listeners’ brains.”

Stories help elected officials do their job. Elected officials want to hear from their constituents so that they know how their decisions impact real people in real places. They pay attention to which programs work in their communities and which ones don’t. Sharing stories will help your elected official understand how your program is changing and improving lives.

The Story Arc

There can be a difference between telling a story and a telling memorable story. Great storytellers often follow the classic story arc below.

1. Introduce the main character (which might be you). What makes him/her relevant and relatable to the audience?

2. Inciting incident- What creates the conflict in the life of the main character?

What spurs them to action?

3. Rising Action

What are the complications and barriers that result from this conflict?

4. Climax/ Turning Point- What changes the direction from the complications and barriers?

5. Falling Action- What happens when that direction is changed?

6. Resolution- What has the main character gained or learned? What can others learn from this story?



Storytelling Tips

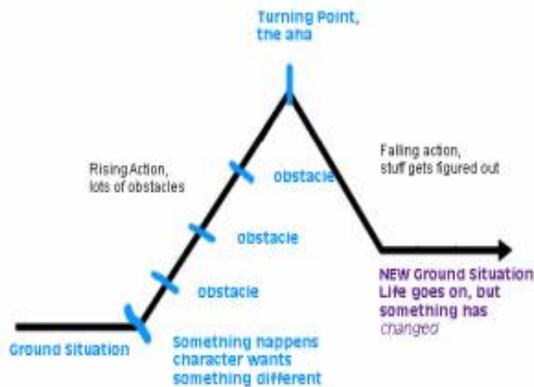
1. **Choose one story to tell.** Advocacy visits are short and you may only have a few minutes to tell your story. Pick one story, free of tangents, that is clear and concise.

2. **Focus on the personal aspects of your story** by sharing one to two details to make it unique and memorable. Elected officials and their staff hear countless stories during a day and details will help them remember you.

3. **Connect your individual story to your larger ask by sharing a piece of data** about the bigger issue it represents. But, this is the icing on the cake. The real purpose of your story is to make your audience care about your issue as much as you do.

4. **Share! (Take a deep breath).** It’s okay to be nervous. Just take a deep breath, stay calm, be yourself and speak from the heart.

Storytelling for Advocacy



Unique and relatable detail:

- 1) Who is the main character? (Hint- it's a person, not an organization, house or community).
- 2) Where and when is the character at the beginning of the story?
- 3) **Inciting incident:** What creates the conflict?
- 4) **Rising Action:** What are the complications and barriers that result from the conflict?
- 5) **Climax/ Turning Point:** What changes the direction for the character?
- 6) **Falling Action:** How does the turning point begin to change the character's life?
- 7) **Resolution:** What has the character gained or learned at the end of the story?

One piece of data to connect to the bigger story:

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Adapted from National Community Land Trust storytelling: <http://cltnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Storytelling-for-Advocacy-2015.pdf>