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How to Tell a Story Safely

Things to Consider

- Your story should not be a full and detailed account of your entire life story and your many experiences throughout life.
- When building your story, eliminate details that are irrelevant to your main messages.
- Don't include details or share experiences that make you feel vulnerable or uncomfortable.
- Make sure you have emotional distance from the experiences you're sharing.

Try

- Boiling your content down to a handful of key messages.
- Presenting how you learned one or two of your key messages.
- Answering the questions, What is the problem? How is change possible?
- Leading the audience to a new learning by talking about a way forward.
- Describing how a problem existed in your life (e.g., stigma) and inspired change.

Avoid

- Too many details or going off on a tangent
- Too many thoughts
- Providing personal details
- Triggering language or descriptions such as details about an overdose or suicide attempt
- Making yourself or your audience uncomfortable

Remember that sharing a personal experience is a brave and vulnerable thing to do and a conference is a public forum. So only share what you're comfortable with everybody knowing about you. Prepare well and practice presenting your story. This will help you stay in control of your messages and make your presentation a positive experience for both you and the audience.

This document was adapted from [How to tell a story safely](#) with permission from [Jack.org](#).



Canadian Centre
on Substance Use
and Addiction

CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

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