

From the Front of the Room

Sharing Your Childhood Story of Domestic Violence



Developed by:



National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence



ACE-DV

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The NRCDV provides a wide range of free, comprehensive, and individualized assistance, training, and specialized resource materials and projects designed to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention strategies.

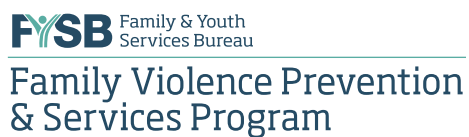
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Introduction

The Adult Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (ACE-DV) Leadership Forum, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV), is comprised of advocates in the movement to end gender-based violence who identify as having experienced domestic violence in childhood. The Leadership Forum was established to amplify the voices and experiences of ACE-DV to enhance our work to end domestic violence. As part of this work, the ACE-DV Speakers Initiative was developed to help build the capacity of adult survivors of children's exposure to share their stories publicly. The Initiative includes the creation of a Speakers Bureau and the development of capacity building tools, including this guide.

This guide, designed for adult survivors, explores the power of storytelling and the unique value that stories of adult children exposed to domestic violence can bring to social change movements, offering guidance for 1) assessing readiness, 2) finding your voice, 3) clarifying your message, and 4) attending to your wellness. Considerations for speaking to key audiences are also included.

This resource is a companion piece to the NRCDV publication, *From the Front of the Room: A Public Speaking Guide for Domestic Violence Survivors & Advocates* (September 2011). It is intended for adult survivors of childhood exposure to domestic violence at any point along the path to healing and resilience – whether you identify as a survivor, an advocate, or both – as a capacity-building tool for harnessing the power of your story to impact change.





The Power of Storytelling


Stories touch us, and stay with us. Stories have the power to inspire, motivate, and expand one's worldview. Across every culture, the historical tradition of storytelling is shared. It is through human narratives – written, oral, painted, sung, or otherwise expressed – that we learn to understand experiences beyond our own, and incorporate that knowledge into our own lives.

It is through stories that humans feel connected to each other. We see ourselves in the stories we take in – drawing on common experiences and familiar feelings to come to a place of empathy, compassion, and respect. Our stories reveal our humanity, and the threads that connect us to others across distance, time, and culture. And our stories inspire action, hope, strength, and unity – engendering change and growth in listeners. Our stories educate and inform youth and generations to come.

Stories are equally powerful to the storyteller. On the path to healing and resilience, telling one's story is an important step – one that helps an individual identify and name their experiences so that they can begin to incorporate them into their whole self. Trauma shapes individuals and the way they see and experience the world around them. There is an important reclamation that occurs when one transforms trauma experiences – something done to them, not within their control – into a story that is theirs to own, to share or not share. It affords survivors a high level of autonomy and empowerment.

Researcher Sherry Hamby emphasizes the personally transformative power of storytelling on one's path to healing and resilience, noting:

“I have been surprised at the power of emotional, autobiographical storytelling. Emotional, autobiographical storytelling means writing about events and people that have mattered to you in your own life – not just describing the facts of your lives. Research shows that even brief autobiographical storytelling exercises can have substantial impacts on psychological and physical health even months after the storytelling”
([Psychology Today, 2013](#)).



The process of recounting and retelling one's story allows for the opportunity to understand and reorganize traumatic experiences, which are inherently fragmented, and from which survivors often emerge numb or disassociated. For survivors of childhood trauma, memories may be lost, blurry, or out of sequence. The process of fitting the pieces together, even if some of those pieces are missing, can be tremendously healing. The sense-making that results from the process of plotting one's narrative can have the impact of building the storyteller's sense of self awareness and, often, closure ([Psychology Today, 2014](#)).

Olga Trujillo, the author of [The Sum of My Parts](#), found that writing about her experience of growing up in a violent home helped her remember a level of detail she hadn't had before.

“Writing helped me to remember the details of how people helped me. It was something I had only vague memories of until I started writing it all out. It was a really healing process for me.” - Olga Trujillo

Beyond documenting one's story, the process of sharing it publicly can have a variety of benefits for the storyteller, including realizing that one's own story can be a catalyst to help, inspire, or motivate others. Telling one's story can be re-affirming for survivors, as they reveal who they are – their values, beliefs, priorities, and strengths – and what they are capable of through their narrative. This process can lead to a renewed sense of peace, possibility, and hopefulness ([NCTIC, 2012](#)).

Dr. Johnny Rice II describes his experience of giving a keynote address at a domestic violence conference where he shared some of his personal experiences as a child exposed to domestic violence:

“Several people came up to me and thanked me for sharing. It was clear that hearing my voice served as validation of their unique experiences. I was encouraged to continue to discuss my journey because it was deemed empowering to those persons in attendance who were also survivors...”
He expressed appreciation for how something that felt like a deficit to him was viewed as an asset to others, and even inspired them to share their own story.

The Messenger Matters

Our work in the movement to end gender-based violence is survivor-centered, and historically survivor-driven. Domestic violence prevention and intervention efforts are most effective and impactful when policies, programs, initiatives, and materials are developed with survivors in response to identified needs and lived experiences. Survivors voices, especially those most marginalized and oppressed, must be lifted up and heard so that efforts to end domestic violence can be truly culturally responsive, inclusive, and helpful. Work that is centered on survivors' experiences continues to change as our stories reveal new lessons, challenges, and opportunities.

Those who survive exposure to domestic violence in childhood have a unique story to tell and perspective to share – one whose themes and lessons offer valuable insights to inform individual, organizational, societal, and systemic approaches to address and prevent gender-based violence. Having lived in a home with a person who used various abusive tactics to exert power and control over the primary caregiver, adult children exposed to domestic violence (ACE-DV) know deeply what it means to grow up in a household environment of tension and fear.

The stories of ACE-DV can paint a picture about the complex and multifaceted experience of living with a batterer. They can draw on those experiences to reveal what it felt like in that moment, how it shaped them as they grew, and how it may continue to impact them throughout their life.

Further, ACE-DV can reflect on key opportunities for intervention and support along their journey – looking back with their adult eyes to offer insights into what was helpful, what was harmful, and how their path may have looked different given new resources, supports, or opportunities. And perhaps most importantly, ACE-DV can share their journey to resilience, noting the factors that helped to foster their resilience capacity and the assets and strengths they have gained.



Assessing Readiness

Telling one's story publicly is a true act of courage. It can be liberating and transformative. It can help lift the burden of silence, pain, isolation, stigma, shame – and create a pathway to healing, support, understanding and change. Remember, though, that telling one's story is a personal choice. Everyone is at their own place in their healing journey, and some may decide that public storytelling is not part of theirs.

There is no right way, time, or venue for telling one's story; no survivor should feel pressured to share; and every survivor has the right to change their mind about what, when, and how to share their story at any time.

“When I first started sharing about my experience of growing up in such a violent home, I would feel great immediately after the presentation. It felt so good to share and to use my experience to help. But in the evening, I would feel alone and heartbroken remembering all that happened. It was a bit of a roller coaster ride.” - Olga Trujillo

To assess your own readiness to share your story publicly, consider:

- What is motivating you to go public with your story?
- Does it feel safe to share your story publicly?
- Who is supporting you in doing so?
- Might your story put your loved ones at risk of harm or jeopardize relationships that are important to you?
- How might telling your story impact your emotional well-being?
- How will you respond to victim-blaming questions or statements from your audience?
- What support system is available to you before, during, and after speaking engagements?
- Do you have sufficient time for self-care practices before and after speaking engagements?

- In what circles are you comfortable or uncomfortable identifying as a trauma survivor?
- If you have told your story before, how did it feel? What was the response? In retrospect, what resources and support do you believe would have been helpful?
- What are other personal considerations important to you? How will you navigate them?

Thinking through responses to these questions can help reveal one's readiness for public storytelling. If the potential risk to the well-being of the speaker and/or their loved ones feels too great, it may be helpful to consider alternative storytelling outlets such as journaling, blogging, or sharing in closed online spaces. It's important to find a balance where the benefits outweigh the potential for harm.



Finding Your Voice

What kind of speaker are you?

Identifying your style of engagement can be helpful in selecting appropriate settings and audiences for your story, and is often based on your storytelling goals.

Inspirational storytellers light a fire inside listeners, often coming from a place of passion to inspire new ways of thinking.

Motivational speakers challenge listeners to change their approach or implement new ways of doing.

Dramatic speakers utilize creative tools such as spoken word, acting, or movement to take listeners on a journey.

Engaging speakers rely on audience's active participation and feedback to advance their message.

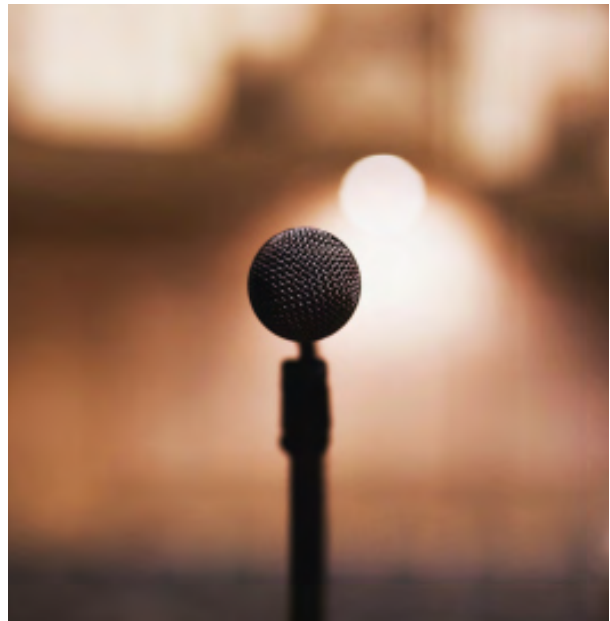
Educational speakers draw on reliable sources of data and information to support their points and increase listeners' knowledge.


Visual speakers may rely on photographs, symbolic imagery, or physical props as part of their storytelling.

Speakers may utilize a variety of styles to most effectively communicate their story to an audience. Consider how you might draw from these techniques to make the greatest impact.

What are the themes of your story?

To understand how your story fits into the larger survivor narrative, and to help determine settings and audiences where it may have the greatest impact, it is important to identify themes that emerge from your story. What are the common threads that weave throughout your story? What are the primary take-aways?





To help identify your story's theme(s), consider what makes your story unique:

What factor(s) helped to foster your resilience?

Can you name a specific relationship with a person or group? Perhaps a skill or talent you worked to develop, or a creative outlet? Are there certain moments or interactions that stick out in your mind as particularly important?

What helped you to deem someone a trusted adult?

How did you identify trusted adults in your life? What was most or least helpful about their communications and interactions with you?

What systems did you interact with on your journey?

In what ways did law enforcement, healthcare, schools, faith communities, cultural societies, or social service systems impact you and your family? What was helpful or unhelpful about these interactions? Where were there missed opportunities?

Were there specific trauma outcomes for you or your family that are particularly powerful?

How did trauma change your family structure? For whom did the impact seem the greatest? What were some of the negative or positive outcomes for you, your siblings, or your parents? Consider both short- and long-term impacts.

What are the most important lessons for you?

How has this experience shaped choices in your adult life? What are you intentional about? What boundaries do you draw? What do you know as a result of this experience that you might not have known?

Thinking through the themes of your story can help you find your niche, which can help you to position yourself in terms of relevance and resonance with particular audiences and in particular settings. When you have a good sense of the themes in your story, you can gain better clarity on how that message may fit when new speaking opportunities arise, or how storytelling may be tailored to best meet an audience's needs.

Clarifying Your Message

The ACE-DV Leadership Forum steering committee, comprised of change-makers in the movement to end gender-based violence who identify as having experienced domestic violence in childhood, identified 6 core beliefs that resonate across their experiences. These beliefs can serve as the basis for developing your key message. Consider how your story might help to illuminate these important points.

1. Children exposed to domestic violence can heal and thrive.

Your story is much more than a tale of adversity.

The deficit model that has been historically used to understand adverse childhood experiences is incomplete. In fact, trauma experiences allow a person to develop specialized skills for adaptation. This is called post-traumatic growth.


In your story, identify the factors that contributed to your resilience capacity. Name lessons learned along the way – ways your experiences have shaped you, informed your choices, and enhanced your understanding of the world. Find the assets you’ve gained in the form of strengths, skills, and tools. And share your strategies for coping, healing, and thriving.

Here are some key points that can help to illuminate a greater understanding of resilience for audiences:

Resilience: Most children exposed to trauma go on to achieve successful and well-adjusted lives. There are many factors that can boost this capacity in humans. We commonly understand resilience as the ability to “bounce back.” When it comes to your story, consider both what you bounced back from as well as what you bounce back to.

Healing: Resilience is a process, and so is the parallel and equally important process of healing. Neither process follows a smooth and upward linear path. Our lives are ever evolving narratives, and as individuals encounter new traumas and challenges, our resilience capacity ebbs and flows.

Post-traumatic growth: It is important to look beyond the deficit model for understanding childhood adversity, and to intentionally include a focus on what assets these experiences can bring. In your story, identify positive long- and short-term impacts on you, your family, and your relationships.



Audiences can benefit from understanding how they can play a critical role in promoting resilience in children exposed to domestic violence. For many, this asset-based model will represent a shift in mindset. This is because our culture's way of understanding trauma dwells on negative outcomes of adverse experiences by focusing on what has been lost, damaged, or impaired. We have been taught to seek the cycles of violence and abuse, and to presume that someone with a history of childhood trauma is doomed to repeat it. Individuals' reactions to stories of adversity – especially those for which resilience is met with shock and surprise, as though it's somehow not the norm – serve to perpetuate this cycle, trapping trauma survivors with these expectations. A paradigm shift in which we instead expect resilience can have a transformative effect on the well being and potential growth of those who have experienced adversity. This is not to suggest that every story should have a happy ending, but that they are complex and result in both losses and gains.


2. Each of us should be allowed and encouraged to name our own experience.

Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that has a lasting effect on a person's life. And trauma is self-defined and self-identified, meaning that what is traumatic for one may not be for another. What can make exposure to domestic violence a unique trauma experience is the fact that it is commonly not just one event, but an ongoing pattern of frightening events happening over and over again. The same is most often true for child sexual abuse.

While trauma is self-defined, the experience does not define you.

But naming your experience is an important step on the path to healing and resilience. In naming the experience, you can push back against the stigma associated with victimization, reclaim ownership of your own narrative, and begin to incorporate this part of you into your whole self.

Survivors who wish to share their story publicly should consider the potential risks of outing themselves in various circles. Bringing your whole self to any setting is an act of bravery, in that the potential or perceived consequences are very real. In your profession or the circles you are speaking in, will naming your survivorship threaten your credibility? Will others perceive you as biased, unqualified, fragile, or damaged? Consider how your story might offer a counter-narrative to these false beliefs, offering a story of strength and wisdom.




When speaking their deepest truth, survivors may be challenged by their audience. Survivor stories are difficult to hear; the actions of those who use violence may seem unbelievable; and it's easy for people to reject realities that are uncomfortable to acknowledge. A victim-blaming mindset remains deeply ingrained for many based on cultural norms and stigma around victimization. The phrase "[speaking truth to power](#)" feels particularly relevant for survivors who share their story publicly. It's about having the courage to tell the truth about your experience in the interest of pushing back against the systems of oppression that allows violence and misogyny to exist. In response to those who may challenge your truth, be assured that you – and only you – are the expert on your own experience. A survivor's story, your truth-telling, should never be open for debate. You may engage in critical conversations intended to clarify your message but never entertain debates about your lived experiences. While your story may intersect with others' experiences (your parents, siblings, etc.), you should resist speaking for them without their permission. There are limits to how and what you may choose to share in order to protect the privacy and safety of others.

When she shares her story, one ACE-DV identified survivor notes that she is just 1 of the 6 people that were living in her house when she was growing up, and that her experiences of abuse and interactions with others were different than her sisters, her mom, and her dad. While she will talk about shared interactions, her experiences of them are unique. She notes that she can only tell her own story.

3. There is a difference between loving a person who abuses and condoning their behavior.

One dynamic that can be challenging for people who have not experienced domestic violence to understand is the complex relationship between a person who uses violence and the family members they abuse. Individuals who have not experienced abuse often describe the choices they would make in such a circumstance without considering all of the factors that make these relationships complex. Your story can help to shed light on the inner conflict that exists for ACE-DV who may both love and hate or want and reject the person who is choosing to use violence in their home. A common desire that many victims share is to want the person using abuse to simply stop. It is not necessarily about rejecting the person, who is



inherently multidimensional with various aspects to their personality that may be appealing, fun, or even loving. It is about wanting them to make different choices. In fact, it can be dangerous to paint a picture of a one-dimensional “monster” in your story.


If we are to offer helpful and effective means of accountability and change, we must understand that people who choose to abuse are human.

4. Violence is learned and reinforced by societal norms, yet accountability and commitment to change can create a new path.

Children can experience multiple forms of trauma, abuse, and oppression across the lifespan, and can learn unhealthy lessons from these experiences. Violence is learned and can be unlearned. Individuals who choose to abuse others to gain and maintain power and control can learn to make non-violent choices. Change is only possible if individuals, institutions, and systems hold perpetrators of abuse accountable for their choices, and if those individuals have the desire and commitment to learn a new way. If your story shows evidence of this possibility, it's important to share it. It will help your audience to envision a world free of violence and abuse.

5. Non-abusive parents are faced with limited and complex choices.

Many embrace the false perception that victims of abuse are either entirely or partially responsible for their own victimization. It can become even more challenging for people to see beyond this victim-blaming framework when children are part of the narrative. When someone blames a victim of abuse for her own circumstance, it is easy to then place additional layer of blame on her for also exposing her children to this harm. This is a dangerous road to travel, and drives us further from the true source of the harm – the person who chooses to abuse. People can get lost in this way of thinking when they do not understand the limited and complex choices that survivors may have when navigating the various tactics that abusers use to frighten, confuse, intimidate, isolate, terrorize, and hurt them. Your story can shed light on this dynamic – making it clear that non-abusive parents are given very few and often difficult options, and are often forced to make painful decisions where either choice may result in putting their loved ones at risk. But ultimately it is the



person using violence who is in complete control, as the survivors' choices are made within these confines.

Your story can also demonstrate the power and strength of survival, showing how the bonds between children and non-abusive caregivers, siblings, extended family, or others can remain and even grow stronger in the face of adversity.

6. Our unique experiences bring added value to the movement.

Although they share common themes, the stories of children exposed to domestic violence are each unique. Even in the same family, each individual has their own experience of and reactions to the violence. The assets and consequences can look different among siblings, each with their own perspective and distinct memories of events. Each of these stories has value, and can shed light on different aspects of the experience of living with a person who uses violence.

Your story is an important contribution to the movement to end domestic violence.

By sharing your experiences, you can enhance and transform individual, organizational community, and systemic approaches to intervention and prevention. Consider the lessons your story might offer to the field. What specific recommendations can you make based on your experience?

Your story might emphasize one or more of the following:

- The importance of creating trauma-informed, culturally-responsive systems (education, child welfare, juvenile justice, etc.) and spaces (classrooms, community centers, daycare centers, courtrooms, tribal councils, etc.).
- The importance of creating age and developmentally appropriate interventions for children and youth exposed to domestic violence.
- How to foster strong bonds between children and their non-abusive caregivers.
- Implementing asset-based interventions for children can boost their resilience capacity.
- The importance of including men in intervention and prevention strategies.

- The value in screening adults for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and offering supports throughout the lifespan.
- Protecting children by supporting their non-abusive parent, even and especially in situations where they remain in contact with their abuser.

Pulling out and emphasizing take-home messages for your audience can help to make your story even more impactful. Consider integrating a specific call to action for your audience. And if it's something they can do or commit to before they even leave the room, it can be that much more powerful.



Considerations for Key Audiences

In many cases, you will address a general, mixed audience. However, there often arise opportunities to speak to a specific audience of professionals. In order to have the greatest impact, it is helpful to consider key messaging that may be most helpful for these audiences to understand. Consider how pieces of your story may resonate with specific audiences differently.



For each of the audiences identified below, you will want to tell stories that highlight any personal interactions you may have had with such professionals both while you were experiencing domestic violence and/or on your path to safety and healing. Explore their helpfulness or harmfulness and suggest ways they may have been more supportive of you and your family.

Child Protective Services


It can be critically important for child protective service staff to understand the importance of strengthening relationships between children exposed and their non-abusive parents, reinforcing the importance of this bond to healing and resilience. Another key message for this group is emphasizing their role in implementing measures that promote treatment and accountability for offending parents.

Health Care Professionals

Health care providers can benefit from learning how trauma-informed and culturally responsive screening for abuse can open the door for early intervention, and how screening for ACEs in adulthood can reveal important information necessary for promoting health and well-being across the lifespan. Sharing information on the [science of trauma](#) can be particularly helpful for this audience.

Teachers and School Staff

School staff, including teachers, coaches, social workers, daycare providers, and others, play a key role in the lives of children, and can benefit from hearing about ways in which



individuals with similar positions may have had a positive impact on your life. Highlight simple [everyday gestures](#) that can build resilience and healing, and emphasize the importance of creating trauma-informed spaces. Explore your own reasons for telling or not telling as a child, whether or not disclosure was important to your path to seeking or receiving help, and what support might look like in either case.

On the college/university level, staff and administration have unique opportunities to be helpful to ACE-DV who may experience triggers in the collegiate environment and are often faced with a new set of choices. At this life stage, survivors may have access to clinical support that may not have existed for them in the past. Tips on how colleges and universities can be helpful to students who are navigating dating relationships and new social environments after childhood trauma can be particularly helpful.

Faith Leaders


Cultural societies or faith communities can offer support and benefit from further education learning how to support community/faith members while continuing the message of prevention, accountability and healing. Faith leaders may approach family conflict with a sense of neutrality when both parents are members of the faith community. This can sometimes lead to harmful messages for children and non-abusive parents in families impacted by domestic violence. The silence of faith leaders in these situations can be just as powerful as the messages that are spoken. It's important for faith leaders to understand what may be communicated to children along the way, and how those messages may impact children across the lifespan.

For example, religious practices may teach children to obey your parents and that God loves and protects you. These messages can be confusing for children whose parents use abuse, or who do not feel protected.

It's important for faith communities to understand that they can create helpful partnerships with community-based domestic violence programs that won't necessarily challenge or dismiss their doctrine. Additionally, faith leaders can provide a helpful outlet for children who experience domestic violence to express their feelings, and can be a strong support by offering a listening ear. Consider sharing your personal interactions with faith leaders and how they impacted you in both helpful or harmful ways.

Criminal Justice Professionals

Police officers, detectives, judges, and attorneys intervene in cases of domestic violence



quite often, and in hugely impactful ways. Helping them to understand what they are seeing when they respond to a call or hear the details of a case can change the way they interact with the family and conduct their investigations. Explaining the tactics you experienced from the abusive parent can be critical to their response. It can be particularly powerful to demonstrate how an abusive parent uses violence, manipulation, threats, the relationships in the family, demeaning and humiliating statements about the victim, psychological abuse, financial control, and threats around immigration status and other tactics to control a family. Sharing how it felt if or when law enforcement was called to your home is a powerful and unique perspective to provide. Showing criminal justice staff how trauma affected the way you presented, thought, and sounded when you talked about the violence as a child is critical to their ability to investigate and make key decisions in these cases. Remember that most with careers in criminal justice entered the profession wanting to help. Your insight can help to shape how they respond to families experiencing domestic violence in the future.

Domestic Violence Advocates

Domestic violence advocates can benefit from hearing how your story illustrates resilience and post-traumatic growth, which represents a shift from the common narrative around deficits after childhood trauma. Describe the strengths you, your siblings, and your non-abusive parent or other caregivers brought to your survival, and explain how those strengths were or might have been nurtured through domestic violence services. Explore the strength of your bonds with family members and the value of supporting those bonds through the healing process.

Researchers and Academics

Researchers and academics play an important role in advancing the knowledge base around trauma and resilience, and in framing the dynamics of domestic violence and nature of exposure. Sharing information that diversifies and challenges dominant narratives around domestic violence exposure can influence future research and program development. Key messages of resilience, interactions with program and services, and variation in experiences are important to expand knowledge and understanding of the complexity of exposure to domestic violence.

Attending to Your Wellness

No matter how much experience one may have in telling their survivor story publicly, it still can take a tremendous toll on your wellness.

It is critical that you listen to your body and respond with kindness, patience, and care.

Do a “temperature check” with yourself at key points to identify feelings that may be coming up for you, and opportunities to practice self care.

Before the Event

For some, the anxiety felt before speaking may result in gastrointestinal distress or discomfort, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, or other symptoms. Consider what factors you may be able to control to help ease your anxiety, whether it’s the time of day you are speaking, creating more time for travel, or inviting support people to accompany you.

During the Event

Who will be there to support or assist you, and what can they do to help? Consider asking people you trust – whether friends, family, event coordinators, or others – to play key roles such as being in the audience as a source of encouragement, giving you visual cues related to pace, timing, and energy, playing the look-out for those who may show up uninvited, or asking planted questions to help the Q & A portion go smoothly. When you are talking about your trauma history, it is not uncommon to revisit or relive those experiences in your mind, along with all of the feelings that accompany them. For some, reading from a written script can help speakers stay on track and even disconnect the pain from the words themselves in a protective way.

After the Event

Pay attention to how you are feeling after you tell your story. For many, there can be a rush of adrenaline upon hearing the audience’s applause and being approached with positive feedback from individual audience members. This may lead to a feeling of let down or deflation once the event is over. Coupled with the experience of reliving past traumas, this can feel overwhelming. It is not uncommon to experience sadness or depression when reflecting on the adversity one has faced. Give yourself the room to process this and work

through it. Consider taking some time off after an event, surrounding yourself with loved ones, doing something to ground yourself in your physical body, talking with a therapist or other support person, or simply enjoying a favorite hobby. While the energy you expelled in telling your story may leave you feeling drained, remember that it is also powerful enough to shift minds and impact the work of many.

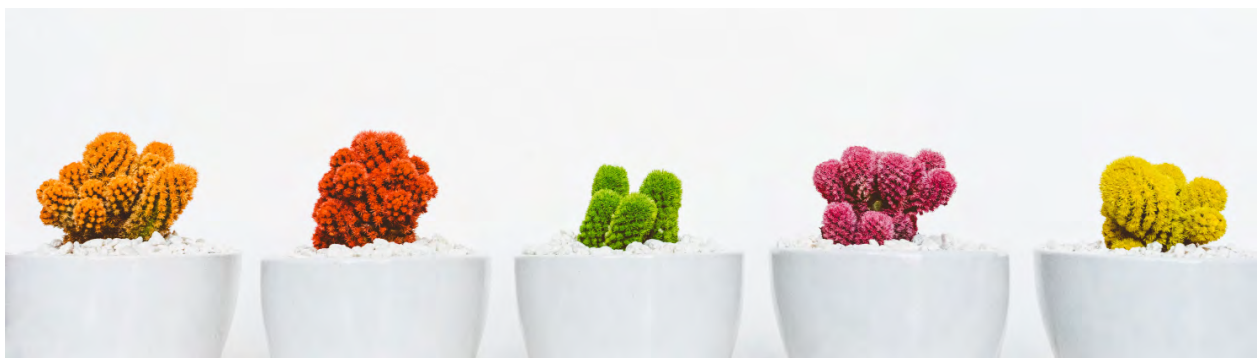
“I have learned that telling my story takes a lot out of me. It’s sometimes like opening a wound, and in that way I have to give myself time to tend to it afterwards. I am easy with myself, and I draw boundaries around that recovery time in advance of any planned event. Scheduling that time, and protecting it, is as important as scheduling the event itself.” - Casey Keene

Conclusion

Your voice is powerful, and your story meaningful. Your decision to share, in whatever venue and with whomever, is one that is personal, and a true gift to those who receive it.

Both documenting and telling your story can be important to your own healing process, and can also transform those around you. Your story can inspire action, hope, strength, and unity. It can engender change and growth in those with whom you share it.

While your voice is unique, and your message is critical, what gives your story the most value is you. By bringing your whole self to this work, you are demonstrating bravery, power, and strength. You are a catalyst for change.





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