



Sharing your personal story is one of the most powerful tools you have when discussing an issue with a decision maker. Whether you have a personal or professional connection to heart disease and stroke, your experience is what brings a subject to life. A story helps demonstrate who you are, and why you want to speak with them about an issue. When you want a decision maker to “see” something they have not considered, a personal story offers a unique perspective – and oftentimes, can make a difference in garnering their support.

### Organize Your Thoughts

- ♥ **Think about how you became involved with American Heart Association/American Stroke Association (AHA/ASA).**
- ♥ **Consider how you and your loved ones have been affected** by the policy issue(s) for which the AHA/ASA is advocating.
- ♥ **Write down your full story**, including why you care about the issue(s), and the clear ask of the decision maker. Outline or bullet form will help keep it concise.
- ♥ **Create a 60-second condensed version** – share your personal story (25 seconds), your link to the AHA/ASA (25 seconds), and clearly state the action item (10 seconds).
- ♥ **Practice presenting to yourself** – speaking to a mirror, or recording on your phone, helps!
- ♥ **Share your story** with a family member or friend.

### Sharing Your Personal Story During a Meeting

- ♥ **Identify you are a constituent** if meeting with your lawmaker.
- ♥ **Share how you are personally connected** to heart disease or stroke, how it affected your health, and how it impacted you emotionally, as appropriate.
- ♥ **Share what has brought you to meet with the decision maker**, whether you are a survivor, caregiver, medical professional, or simply passionate about the issue.
- ♥ **Highlight the most relevant and compelling facts** that pertain to your story: let your personal experience bring those facts to life.
- ♥ **End the meeting with a clear ask** for the decision maker to support the issue(s).

### Additional tips and tricks you can use to craft your own message

- ♥ **Be authentic:** your heartfelt story can help your decision-maker connect better with your request.
- ♥ **Always make sure to include the Who, What, When, Where, and Why** of your story: this helps to make sure you cover all the big pieces and offer a complete picture for your audience.
- ♥ **Clearly state the impact your lawmaker’s support** will have on their home district.

**For more information and tips on writing and the power of sharing your story:**

<https://www.yourethecure.org/shareyourstorytips>