

Advocate Storytelling Toolkit

A Strategic Storytelling Toolkit for Organ and Tissue
Donation & Transplantation Advocates



Your Story is My Story Too!

How to use this toolkit

The **Advocate Storytelling Toolkit** is designed to help you incorporate first-person storytelling into advocating for organ and tissue donation and transplantation and increasing donor registration rates across Ontario.

This toolkit will show you how to bring your donation and transplantation experiences to life so readers and listeners are inspired to give consent, talk to their families, and register. Inside this toolkit you'll discover practical tools that writers and speakers use when they have a compelling and compassionate message to share.

You are a leader. You are a storyteller.

Top Benefits of Using This Storytelling Toolkit

1. Invite your audience to see themselves in your story and increase your ability to connect with readers and listeners.
2. Inspire people to take action by registering as donors.
3. Feel confident and in command when writing and speaking to be able to motivate and inspire an audience.
4. Organize your story for the greatest impact and learn how to develop powerful presentations and present data (dates, places, names) in visual and emotional ways.
5. Discover practical tools writers and speakers use on both the page and the stage.
6. Position yourself as a compelling, confident, and courageous storyteller.

“ **The ability to see our lives as stories rather than unrelated, random events increases the possibility for significant and purposeful action.** ”

- Daniel Taylor, *Tell Me a Story: The Life-Shaping Power of Our Stories*

Getting Started

How much should I share?

Often, when we have a compelling story to share, we present a lot of information. We include important dates, names, and places. We use medical jargon. We go back in time and unpack our story in chronological order.

However, too much data in a story can make a reader or listener feel confused or overwhelmed. But a storyteller brings numbers to life. They paint pictures with words. They make a personal story a universal experience that's emotional, uplifting, and inclusive.

“

Most people believe that readers and listeners need more information before they take action. But your reader or listener doesn't need more information, they need hope and faith in *you and your story*.

”

Your Turn

Step 1: Decrease the Data

How do you usually open your story? Do you introduce yourself (name), say where you're from (place) and explain what has happened to you (dates)? List five names, places, dates, surgeries, or other pieces of data that you usually include in the opening paragraphs of your story.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

From your list of five examples, choose three that you consider the most important. For example, you may choose the date you received your gift of life or how long you or your loved one was in hospital. For example, "For six months I waited..."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Emotion Is the Potion

What do you want your audience to **Feel, Think,** or **Do** about each piece of information? Be as specific as possible. Remember: “show don’t tell” your data.

| My three most important names, places, dates, or other data are... | When people read or listen to this information, I want people to Feel ... | When people read or listen to this information, I want people to Think ... | When people read or listen to this information, I want people to Do (action to take)... |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |

Step 3: Put Your Data in the Middle or at the End

You want people to care and to see themselves in your story. You want to connect with your audience, not confuse them. One of the most effective ways to connect immediately with your audience is to **start your story with a scene** they can recognize and imagine.

By choosing to shift the majority of your data to the middle or end of your story, you’re better able to build a powerful and emotional opening scene.

Step 4: Open with Who, Where, What (W3)

Open your story with a scene that introduces Who (no more than two characters), Where (specific location), and What (the action).

When you think about your story, what specific scene comes to mind? What memory or moment is especially powerful for you? Let’s begin your story there.

Who is in the scene? *Include no more than two characters.*

Where is the scene? *Be specific.*

What is happening in the scene? *Show don’t tell.*

Structure Your Story

How do I organize my ideas?

A powerful story needs more than imagery, emotion, and a compelling message. Stories need structure so your audience feels reassured as well as intrigued. Before a reader or listener will agree to give you their most precious resource—their time and attention—they must trust you to take them on a journey they can follow, relate to, and be inspired by.

Now that you have planned to introduce the majority of your data in the middle or at the end of your story, it's time to decide how to organize the rest.

Choosing one of the three story structures below assures your audience that you are in command of your story and your emotions.

When you feel comfortable and confident within your story and “show don't tell” the **Feel, Think** and **Do** within a familiar structure, your audience can relax. They accept your invitation to take a journey and agree to be transformed by your story and the future you want to create with them.

Three Story Structures

1. Possibility Story (POS)

This structure is built around a Possibility, Obstacles, and a Solution. When you look to the future, what do you see? Show your audience the kind of world you need their help in creating. Your vision will likely generate “yeah, but...” responses in your audience. Name the obstacle or problem to solve. If possible, show a real-life example of challenges being overcome by people just like them. Guide the audience to come to their own conclusions about the solution. Show your reader or listener that registering as an organ and tissue donor is the best and most impactful solution.

2. Then-Now-How Story

A story is more than a narration of events. When you structure your story, you want to show your reader or listener what the events mean to you and your audience. When using a chronological structure, remember to show *how* you've been transformed and why you believe your story is your audience's story too. This structure is also called Before and After or Past, Present, and Future.

3. Set-the-Scene Story

An entire presentation can be structured around scenes grounded in Who, Where, and What (W3). Audiences need to be able to picture the story you are creating. Introducing a scene with people (Who), a specific location (Where) and clear action (What) connects with the audience because they can see, feel, and care about your story immediately. To prevent data overload, include no more than two people for your Who.

Choose a Story Structure That Highlights Your Message

Think about how you could tell your story using each of the three story structures. As you reflect on your journey, the people you want to influence, and the emotions you want to inspire, answer the following questions. Use additional paper if necessary.

Possibility Story (POS)

Show the Possibility, the Obstacle and the Solution. Complete the following sentence stems. Think big. If you had a magic wand, how would you change the world? Honour the audience by showing them you see, hear, and understand their world... and that you still have hope and faith in the future.

Possibility: Imagine if _____

Obstacle: But we all know that _____

Solution: Today we can _____

Then-Now-How Story

When using a chronological structure like this, always “show don’t tell” what the events mean to you and the people you love. You are more than a narrator of events. You are assigning meaning to what has happened to you. Show the audience how your personal experiences are important to you but also universal. “Emotion is the potion” when bringing people, places, and things to life.

What was my life like before?

What is my life like now?

How did my life change so dramatically?

Set-the-Scene Story

You previously learned about setting the scene as a way to open your story. Consider another powerful and emotional scene in your story. Show that scene based on what you want people to **Feel, Think** and **Do**.

Who (one or two characters) is in my story?

Where (specific location) does my story start?

What (the action happening) is happening in my story?

Polish Your Story

How do I decide what to keep?

Editors help us decide what to keep in our story and what to leave behind. You can be your own most trusted and loving editor.

When editing your story, remember to make decisions about content that push the story forward and assure the audience that the journey is moving fast and with purpose.

Choosing to delete something from your story, such as an event, emotion, or person, does not mean you are deeming it unimportant. Instead, letting things go in your story serves you and your audience by cutting the clutter. An audience cannot connect with you if they're confused by your story.

Edit Like A Pro

Look out for these three Rs when polishing your story.

Redundancies: Parts of a sentence or message that can be deleted without negatively affecting meaning. For example, “unsolved mystery,” “very low,” “in order to donate.”

Repetition: Repeating key phrases or messages increases impact and memory retention for an audience. On the other hand, repetition of names, places, and dates may confuse an audience.

Reward: A satisfying emotional state connecting storyteller to audience. Make it personal! You want your reader or listener to feel as if you're talking to them one-on-one. For example, replacing “everyone,” “anybody,” or “all of you” with “you” is powerful and personal.

Be the editor!

Below is an example of how to put the three Rs into action. Note the edits in red. A final edit and rewrite of this story excerpt is below.

On ~~March 20th, 2008 at 11:11 pm,~~ everyone was at the hospital in the hallway and ~~they all~~ looked very happy. Billy and Bob, ~~followed closely by Mona and Lil,~~ were first shown! in the room and they brought me a lovely gift in order to make me feel better. I cried ~~so much,~~ as anybody could imagine. ~~I was so glad to be alive.~~ I felt loved that day in the hospital ~~surrounded by my family and friends.~~

excess data

repetition

Ten years ago this spring, my two brothers visited me in hospital. They were overjoyed and brought me a giant bouquet of purple flowers, my favourite colour. You can imagine how I felt when I read their card: "We love you and are so grateful you've received your Gift of Life." I will never forget that day because...

Your Turn

Rewrite the following passage and focus on cutting redundant words and repetition that don't move the narrative forward. Remember to add audience rewards—make it personal!

In order to breathe, I was attached to an oxygen tank. I had to breathe in oxygen through my nose. I live in Woodstock, a tiny community 55-km east of London, and the news about my oxygen tank travelled fast to the 41,000 people who live in my tiny small and friendly town.

Inspire Your Audience to Take Action

How do I close my story?

Leaders look to the future with hope and faith. So does your story. Balancing credibility with vulnerability by sharing your first-person experiences promises the reader or listener that they can trust you and confidently make the decision to become a donor.

As you close your story, remember that you want your audience to feel inspired, hopeful and absolutely clear on what to do next. How can you make a compelling and clear call to action that inspires the audience to take the next steps—**to register online or in-person, confirm their donor status, and talk with their family?**

Key Messages to Inspire and Educate

Here are examples of specific messages you may choose to weave into your story and support your call to action.

- Everyone has the potential to be an organ and tissue donor regardless of age or health.
- One individual organ donor can save up to 8 lives and enhance the lives of 75 others through tissue donation.
- Every three days someone will die waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.
- Organ donor cards are no longer in circulation. You need to register your consent with the Ministry of Health online at beadonor.ca or in person at any ServiceOntario Centre.
- On average, there are 1,400 Ontarians waiting for a life-saving transplant.
- Speak with your family about your donation decision.

Calls to action

Here are examples of first-person calls to action that can be delivered on both the page and the stage.

“Considering becoming a donor? Fantastic! Go to **beadonor.ca** to learn more and register. All you need is your health card. It takes less than two minutes!”

“Think you’re already a registered donor? Even if you’ve signed a donor card, you still need to register your consent to donate. Visit **beadonor.ca** to check your status, then spread the word.”

“You’ve registered—now what? Share your decision and leave a legacy. Remember to talk with your family so they’re clear about your wishes. Tell them you want to save lives and encourage them to visit **beadonor.ca** to learn more.”

Your Turn

Write down your own call to action. Remember to look to the future with hope and faith. Leave an uplifting message and invite the audience to take inspired action.

Speak Your Story

How do I move from the page to the stage?

Storytelling is a communication technique that inspires, influences, and persuades. When stories are told on stage, whether to small or large audiences, people's hearts and minds are opened. Speaking your story is a powerful way to raise awareness about organ and tissue donation in Ontario.

You do *not* have to be a perfect public speaker to tell a compelling story. You do want to speak from the heart. Practice speaking with clarity and confidence. Some tips follow to help you master the ability to command—not control—a room with ease and openness.

Avoid Surprises, Command the Stage

Surprises in a story are fun and satisfying for the audience. For a storyteller on stage, surprises are best avoided. Below are four tips for ensuring your page-to-stage experience leaves you feeling comfortable, confident, and excited about getting up on stage again.

- 1. Know your audience.** There is a big difference between telling your story to ten people and performing your story in front of one hundred people. Before speaking, know how many people are in the audience and their approximate age. Determine their awareness about organ and tissue donation. Find out what is happening at the event before, during, and after you speak.
- 2. Stand before speaking.** When you are introduced—preferably using a bio written by you and tailored to the audience—remember to stand, smile, and scan the audience. Standing for at least two minutes before speaking helps you manage your nerves and take command of the room. As you walk to the stage, move slowly, smile, and breathe.
- 3. Find friendly faces.** Before beginning your story, take a moment to look at your audience silently. Give them a moment to look at you so they feel ready to listen. Divide your audience into three sections. Look for one friendly, attentive person in each part of the room. Those are the faces you will make eye contact with throughout your story.
- 4. Stay positive.** If you're asked a negative or inappropriate question, avoid repeating the question. Instead, reframe the question in a positive light or refocus on something you want the audience to learn or remember. Bring the focus back to you and your story to ensure the audience leaves thinking about your call to action, not the unwelcome distraction.

For example, Q: "How are unicorns made?"

A: "I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is on average, there are 1,400 Ontarians waiting for a life-saving transplant. By registering at [beadonor.ca](https://www.beadonor.ca) you can save lives..."

Then turn to another part of the room that feels friendlier and ask, "What questions do you have over here?"



Terms to know

Audience

The people you are working to reach and from whom you want attention and action. Your audience is a group of individuals looking for hope in the future. The audience is active, whether they are reading or listening to your words. They want to participate in your story.

Brand

The process of creating words, images, and associations in the mind of your audience. Perception is key when educating Ontarians about organ and tissue donation. Your brand is only as strong as the impact you have on your reader or listener. Paint a picture of experiences and solutions that inspire and influence people to continue the conversation and take action.

Culture

The means by which values, beliefs, habits, norms, and traditions are accepted into mainstream society. Culture is predominantly created by the stories we tell ourselves about others and how we tell stories to other people. When looking to shift the status quo, share and encourage the consideration of different stories.

Influence

The process of stirring curiosity, inviting attention, and allowing an audience to come to their own conclusions, as opposed to convincing a reader or listener to change. By building on what the audience already believes is important, this process makes taking action feel like the next logical and positive step.

Storytelling

The oldest communication technology on the planet. Personal experiences, events and emotions are conveyed using words and images. Narrative appears in every culture as a form of communication, education and reinforcement of moral values.

Resources

Books

Believe Me: A Storytelling Manifesto for Change-Makers and Innovators by Michael Margolis (You can download a free digital copy by visiting GetStoried.com)

The Nuts and Bolts of Public Speaking: Practical Tools for Powerful Presentations by Craig Valentine

The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion through the Art of Storytelling by Annette Simmons

Tell Me a Story: The Life-Shaping Power of Our Stories by Daniel Taylor

Your Story: How to Write It So Others Will Want to Read It by Joanne Fedler

Videos

Brené Brown's TED Talk "The power of vulnerability" at [TED.com](https://www.ted.com)

Amy Cuddy's TED Talk "Your body language may shape who you are" at [TED.com](https://www.ted.com)

TGLN Resources

To watch the video "Advocate Stories," visit vimeo.com/24887597

[SIGN-UP](#) to receive the The Touchpoint newsletter to learn more about organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Ontario and see what advocates are up to across Ontario!

To find out more about Ontario Health (Trillium Gift of Life Network)'s Community Support Program, visit giftoflife.on.ca/en/community.htm

The Backstory

This toolkit was created thanks to the vision and leadership of the Public Education & Marketing Department of Ontario Health (Trillium Gift of Life Network) in partnership with Raystorm Communications, a writing-and-speaking studio dedicated to empowering voices on page and stage.

This initiative was inspired by the insight and contributions of those personally affected by donation and transplantation, particularly the dedicated and compassionate organ and tissue donation awareness advocates who shared their voice in the TGLN Storytelling Webinar Series.

We are also grateful to the many storytellers who participated in the accompanying TGLN Advocate Provincial Tour, which connected change-makers across the province in 2018.

Storytellers, this toolkit is dedicated to you and the world you want to see.

The Raystorm Communications team who contributed to the development of this toolkit includes: Shannon Leahy, Toastmasters Toronto, Norm Beaver, Dingle Sweden, Sara Goodchild, and David Montle. Special thanks to Michael Margolis for being one of the original lighthouses.