

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

JULY

Tips for Sharing Your Story

The following steps have been modified from NAMI's Smarts and Hearts advocacy training to help you craft your story in a succinct and powerful way to be featured throughout the month of July, National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.

Each step includes examples that will give you an idea of how to craft your story. Since the goal is to share your story in a way that showcases your personal interpretation of the month's meaning and importance, feel free to put things in your own words, change the statements and the order of information provided.

See the [NAMI Website](#) for more information about National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.

1. Introduce yourself

- * **Share your full name and city or town.** This helps your audience connect with you.

I'm (name) and I'm from (county or city).

- * **Share the cultural perspective with which you identify.** If your story involves a culturally-relevant experience, this is particularly helpful to identify as part of your introduction. Complete the following sentence or write your own:

As a member of the (African American, America Indian, Asian American, Latina/Latino, member of the GLBT, etc.) community, I am sharing my story to highlight the meaning/importance of National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.

- * **Let your audience know how you are affected by mental illness.** This gives a "real face" to the intersections of culture, mental illness and recovery and prepares your audience to empathize with your story. Complete the following sentence or write your own:

I live with (or am a parent of a child or have a relative/friend with or work with people who live with) mental illness.

2. What happened

What happened before you go the help you needed? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own, focusing on a particular event/ experience:

- Before my (own child's, partner's, parent's, client's, etc.) recovery, I/we went through some (challenging, difficult, dark) times. I/we ... (experienced hospitalization, didn't have a place to live, was in jail, felt belittled and misunderstood, was excluded, could not find a provider from my same cultural background, felt disrespected/ stereotyped/ discriminated by my provider, had a very hard time accessing treatment in my language of preference, etc.)*
- Before I/we got the help I/we needed, I/we... (see above for examples)*

3. What helped?

Complete one of the following sentences or write your own. Add a sentence or two about someone or something that helped specifically address your/ a loved one's recovery needs. *What helped you find support/ NAMI?*

- a. *The/My (program name or therapist, doctor, ACT team, case manager, peer support specialist, etc.--name one or two) has/have made a big difference in my life.*
- b. *The support I get/got from (name of program or professional/staff) has helped me manage my (main diagnosis or "mental health condition").*
- c. *By being able to include all the aspects of who I am, particularly my culture, in my recovery, I am able to manage my (main diagnosis or "mental health condition").*

4. How are you different today?

Share what is going right in your life or how you are experiencing recovery. Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. *Today, I am... (for example, a peer support specialist; working part time; living on my own; doing much better; hopeful, staying out of jail/hospital, sharing my perspective to help others, etc.).*
- b. *Today, I'm proud of the fact that ... (for example, I'm living in a group home and not the state hospital; starting to work; doing well; feeling like my life has meaning; I am telling my story; my daughter is experiencing recovery; there's greater awareness and acceptance of mental illness in my community, etc.)*

5. Make your point

Talk about mental illness or mental health care and the hope of recovery. This is a transition from your personal story to a message for your audience. Give a brief, positive message about inclusive and culturally competent mental health practices and their role in recovery. Feature the importance of public awareness campaigns, outreach to diverse populations, etc. Use one of the following sentences or write your own:

- a. *Mental health services/supports that are responsive to the needs of (American Indian/ Alaska Native, Hispanic, GLBT, African American, Asian American, etc.) communities are an investment in recovery. I'm living proof.*
- b. *Mental illness is common in every community and, when culturally competent services are available, recovery is possible in every community.*
- c. *Many people in my community have mental illnesses like mine, but not all get the help they need. With culturally competent mental health services, more people could experience recovery.*

6. Make your "ask"

Let your audience know the action or position you would like them to take to help support National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. Use one of the following sentences or write your own:

- a. *Take part in mental health awareness campaigns among diverse communities and spread the message of the hope of recovery and available support to all who need it.*
- b. *Please join me in promoting the inclusion of all diverse communities in our mission of support and recovery.*
- c. *Join me during National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and speak up about mental illness and the need for care.*

You could also focus your “ask” on advocating for an inclusive, culturally and linguistically competent mental health system in general such as:

- e. *You can help us eliminate disparities in mental health care by supporting standardized statewide race and ethnicity data collection and public posting of meaningful performance, process and outcome measures.*
- f. *Please join me in supporting equal access to quality mental health care by promoting access to language-appropriate services.*
- g. *Please help me address the dire lack of bicultural/bilingual mental health professionals by supporting multicultural workforce development efforts.*
- h. *Everyone should receive culturally appropriate treatment. Please support incorporating cultural and linguistic competence standards in requirements for mental health funding.*

7. Closing Statement

Your closing is completely optional. For example, you could suggest a resource for further reading, promote a National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month activities in your area (be sure to provide further contact information for getting involved), etc.

On the next page you will find a practice sheet to help form your personal story based on these seven steps.

Once you have created your story for National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, share it with others! Consider emailing a copy to macenter@nami.org to be potentially nationally highlighted through NAMI media outlets.

Practice Sheet

Sharing Your Story for National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

1. My introduction	Aim for 3-4 sentences. Your name, city and how you are affected by mental illness. Add the cultural perspective with which you identify.
2. What happened	Aim for 5-8 sentences. Briefly describe what happened before you got the help you needed.
3. What helped	Aim for 4-7 sentences. Describe what helped in your recovery, especially if culturally appropriate.
4. How I'm different today	Aim for 1-3 sentences. Share what is going right in your life or how you are experiencing recovery.
5. My point	Aim for 1-3 sentences. Talk about mental illness or mental health care and give a message of hope.
6. My "ask"	Aim for 1-2 sentences. Let your audience know how they can help. Say thank you.
7. Closing Statement	Optional 1-2 sentences. Direct your audience to a resource, event or volunteer opportunity, etc.