



ASAM ADDICTION MEDICINE  
ACTION NETWORK

## Role of Personal Stories in Advocacy

As physicians and other clinicians who treat addiction, you have unique and important personal experiences to share. Storytelling can be an effective tool to confront stigma, improve understanding, and increase empathy. **A powerful story can motivate and encourage action.**

## Tips & Best Practices

### Know Your Ask

Think about why you are telling your story and what you want your audience to take away. Do you want them to support a policy? Better understand an issue? Advocate on your behalf? Tailor your story to support your ask.

### Know Your Audience

Consider if your audience has experience with addiction, addiction medicine, or a base understanding of who ASAM is. If you're not sure, ask! Knowing more about your audience can help you connect with them on a personal level.

### What is Storytelling?

Storytelling is a practice of leadership that draws on personal experiences and encourages listeners to feel an emotional response that moves people to take action.

An emotional appeal can make an audience feel excited, sad, angry, motivated, jealous, or any other feeling that may *persuade them to act* based on what you say.

### Opportunities to Share Your Story

- ◇ Meetings & hearings
- ◇ Speeches & presentations
- ◇ Interviews
- ◇ Written communications (emails, op-eds, letters)
- ◇ Social media- Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

When meeting with policymakers or their staff, do some research and see if they've sponsored addiction-medicine related legislation before or if they're supportive of other ASAM policies.

Your ask will vary based on your audience's knowledge level. If they understand the issue at hand and are supportive, thank them for their support and encourage them to keep it up. For those who are interested in the issue at hand, use your storytelling as an opportunity to educate and ask them to support ASAM efforts. Finally, for unsupportive audiences, take time to understand their perspective and use this knowledge to persuade them to reconsider while educating them further.

## Connect Your Experience to Your Advocacy

Think of your storytelling as an opportunity to connect policy with real-world impact and make clear why your audience should care.

While first-hand accounts and your personal story are extremely effective, stories from patients or colleagues can be compelling too. The important thing is highlighting a real-world problem and tying the solution to your advocacy ask.

## Keep It Short and Simple

Practice telling your story and be prepared to "close" if you run short on time. ASAM is also available to help you refine and perfect packaging your experience into a personal and impactful story.