



YOUR STORY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Stories inspire people. They allow someone to see issues and experiences through the eyes of another. They can teach people about issues and motivate them to take action.

Many of us have a story from our personal or professional lives about how commercial tobacco use has impacted us or motivated us to prevent commercial tobacco from hurting our communities.

Perhaps a close family member or friend has died from smoking. Maybe you are motivated by the opportunity to create a safe future for your children or to just improve public health. Perhaps you are driven to help reduce health disparities resulting from tobacco use and the industry that promotes it.

Your personal story can help to educate communities and decision makers, create conversations, and to help recruit new supporters and advocates. Your story matters!

STORIES SHOULD BE:

- > Personal
- > Impactful
- > Understandable
- > Brief



"My grandfather was a chain smoker and would constantly smoke in our home, exposing my family and me to the thousands of toxic chemicals that soon killed my grandmother. She was only 51 when she died from lung cancer. Her death caused great turmoil in our family. My grandmother was the heart and love that kept our family together. The tobacco industry took her away from me when I was eleven. I will never forgive or forget what tobacco has done to my grandmother, so today I am fighting for smoke-free multi-unit housing in our city. Growing up in a low-income Asian American immigrant household, my family didn't learn about the damaging health effects of secondhand smoke. Everyone deserves to keep their loved ones and breathe clean air in their homes."

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A simple story that is personal and relevant can make an impact! Prioritize visual storytelling by using pictures and videos when you can. It can help make your story interesting and help connect with supporters without them even reading a word about it. Your story can be told through:

- Social media posts
- Public comment at a city council meeting
- Media interviews
- Speaking at a community organizing event or rally
- Authoring a letter to the editor
- Authoring a blog post for your website
- A one-on-one meeting with a potential new coalition member

PAIR THE STORY WITH YOUR CAMPAIGN'S STRONGEST ARGUMENTS. Weave stories into your campaign's messaging. Think about how different parts of a story can be used to bolster your arguments. For example, the story about losing a grandmother to lung cancer can be used to urge the city to enact smoke-free multi-unit housing policies.



SEVEN COMPONENTS OF CREATING AN EFFECTIVE STORY

1. **Simple/Brief:** Keep your story brief and easy to understand. Be clear about what you're here for and where you stand on the issue.
2. **Personal:** Create a personal connection. Are you a constituent of the decision maker(s)? Do you live in the same neighborhood or do your children go to the same school? Share firsthand experience that is related to the problem.
3. **Understandable:** Know your audience. Tailor your story to be well received by the listeners.
4. **Relevant:** Use data people can easily understand and make it as relatable as possible by creating a mental picture or visuals. Help draw a picture for your audience.
5. **Impactful:** Regardless of the audience size, a good story works for any audience. It should leave an impression.
6. **Meaningful:** Why does your story matter to you? What makes people want to hear your story?
7. **Ask/demand:** Always end with an ask. Let them know what you want them to do!

For more information, technical assistance and training on storytelling, contact the Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement www.organizingtoendtobacco.org

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