

STORYTELLING TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND SUPPORTERS

WHEN SHARING A STORY THAT INCLUDES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Get consent. Even if you have legal guardianship or are discussing your family member, share what you plan to say and seek informed consent from them prior to sharing a story. People have different preferences about what they want others to know about their life.

Protect others' privacy. Stories live publicly once told, even if you take them off a website or social media later. Some information or details people share can be embarrassing for people with disabilities (e.g., incontinence and diaper usage, discussing mental health issues). Make sure that people are okay with the information being shared.

Consider how to represent people with disabilities in your story. Too often, people with disabilities are reduced to a line in the story, used as inspiration, or discounted (particularly if they are medically complex or nonverbal). As you put together your story, consider how the people with disabilities in your story are shown. Make sure that it reflects the value you feel for the person you are speaking about.

Focus on your whole family. Sometimes, family members may share a story and focus only on how it impacts themselves or

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their family member with a disability. Families are not just individuals living together – when sharing a story, it's okay to focus on the whole family.

You don't have to be a policy expert. It's okay not to know all the details of a policy issue or law. You may only know that something that was unfair or unjust occurred. If you have a story like this, reach out to a group like a chapter of The Arc to share your story. Advocacy organizations can help you figure out how to frame your story in the lens of a policy issue.

WHEN SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

Help them understand and use their storyteller rights. Make sure that the person you support knows how their story will be used and shared and is comfortable with that. Support them to take the time they need to think about what they want/don't want to share.

Respect storyteller's choices. If the person you support wants to share a particular story or detail, support their choices. If there is a significant concern around privacy or safety, it's okay to flag this to them, but respect the decisions they make after you flag issues to them.

Encourage them to share stories that reflect their complexity. Too often, people with disabilities are used as inspiration or as a soundbite. Encourage people to share stories that show who they are fully.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT STORIES@THEARC.ORG.

FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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