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TELLING YOUR CARE STORY

As an advocate of CARE Action, you are part of something bigger than yourself and are connected to people around the world who seek a world of hope, inclusion and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security. You are part of a community of people who make a difference, and who care about dignity and inclusiveness. Advocacy with CARE affirms your commitment to standing with individuals and communities across the globe. Together, we are a movement that gives hope to the thousands of women and girls that inspire our work, and we change the world.

Each of us joined CARE for a reason, and **these stories matter**. Our stories help us find commonality across experience, geography, background and motivations, and weave a web of relationships that makes CARE Action powerful. Your story can help build the movement! **By telling the story of why you joined CARE and why you lead in your community, you can motivate others to act**. Whether it's encouraging someone through signing a petition, joining a group, taking on a new leadership role, or even convincing your Member of Congress to sponsor legislation on Capitol Hill, it is through shared action that we are most influential. Our voices allow our realizations of the vision of a world in which everyone's rights are respected and upheld.

Your story can build connections, inspire people to make a difference, move people to action and change the world. **This toolkit, paired with our virtual and in-person storytelling workshops, will provide a guide for you to craft a compelling story about why and how you are fighting for a better future alongside CARE.**

Why Do We Tell Stories?

Marshall Ganz, the creator of Public Narrative, notes that “leadership means taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty” (Ganz, 2008).

Storytelling is an act of leadership. When we tell stories about the choices we’ve each made, we invite others into a relationship and community while also motivating people to take action with us. Stories help build connections and understanding, so by sharing your story you are adding to the conversation and the voices of many combatting the dangers of the single story. By lending your voice, you contribute to a more inclusive and equitable world.

Additional Resources:

- [Why Stories Matter](#)
- [How To Tell Your ‘Story of Self’](#)

“I realized advocacy is just talking about what you’re passionate about.

It becomes easy and natural quickly.”

— Dan Berger, CARE advocate, Pennsylvania

3 Ways to Share Your Story

1. Recruiting in your community

Stories are key in building your base within your community, district or state. You can employ your story both online and in-person to bring new members or reengage members in CARE’s advocacy. Here are some examples:

- Tell your story as you open events, panels, or meet-ups to make sure everyone in the room is grounded in who you are and who the CARE group is
- Share your story on Instagram to help inspire others
- Use the elements of storytelling to bring urgency into your newsletters and emails

2. Meeting with Members of Congress

This can be the most impactful way to use your story as you speak to those in power. At CARE, we will equip you with all the information, data, and numbers for your meeting, but **it’s up to you to make sure your passion and connection to these issues shines through.** Learn more about [how to hold meetings with your Member of Congress here](#), and consider these two quick ways to bring your story into the meeting:

- **First**, have a quick 60- 90 second story ready to go at the beginning of a meeting when the traditional introduction round happens. Show how you’re connected to the issues personally as a constituent in their district/state.
- **Second**, if you are in a one-on-one meeting with a staffer of a Member of Congress, you’ll have more freedom to weave your story throughout the meeting.

3. Letters to the Editors

Letters to the editor that include personal stories are often more compelling and are more likely to be published. [CARE will always provide a template with the language on specific legislation that is needed](#), but we hope that you take the template and make it your own. Using the elements of storytelling **you can craft your story in written form** to include the values and emotions that will not just educate other readers but spur them to action.

Values Inspire Action Through Emotion

*We don't think of our values, we feel our values. Often, we don't realize what we value in the world until we hear a story or witness an injustice that stirs emotions within us. **Emotions inform us of what we value in ourselves, in others, and in the world.** They enable us to express the motivational content of our values to others. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience. They have the power to move others to action.*

Creating Your Advocacy Story

Every story has a plot. A plot begins with a challenge that confronts a character with an urgent need to pay attention or to make a choice. The choice yields an outcome and the outcome teaches a moral. A good story allows the listener to empathetically identify with the character and “feel” the moral. We hear about someone’s courage, and we are also inspired by it.

Structure and Elements

“Story of Self:” You are communicating the values that move you to advocate. Telling your story of self can help establish firm ground for leadership, collaboration and discovering common purpose.

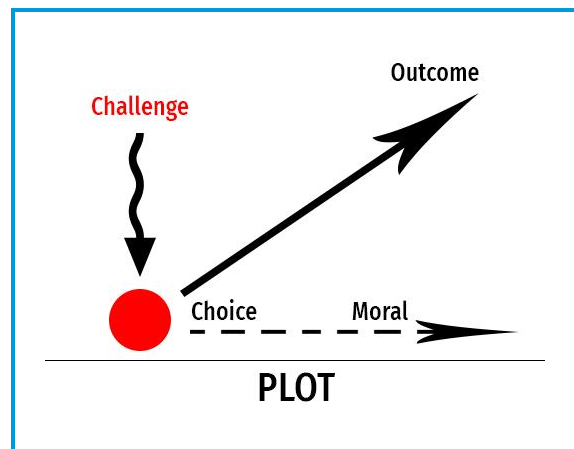
1. A hook: Every good story includes a strong hook that grabs the reader or listener and makes them want to continue with you in your story.

- When you’re telling your story in a CARE setting, hook your reader or listener with a detailed story that evokes one or two of the senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell or taste). You want them to be transported into that place with you.

2. A challenge: Good stories engage by presenting a crisis, disagreement, disappointment or loss that threatens or changes your perspective.

- This challenge is personal to you. It could be a feeling that you don’t have purpose in your personal or professional life or even something earthshattering like losing a family member.

3. A choice: While you have your reader or listener captivated in the challenge that your facing, drive home the specific choice you made in that moment.



- If your choice was joining your first CARE meeting in your local district, paint that picture for us. What did the room look like, who was there, what were you feeling? Be specific!

“Story of Us:” By telling the story of us, you communicate values that can inspire others to act together by identifying with each other, not only you.

4. Community: Good stories weave together individual stories to create a collective “Us.” This is where you can bring your audience into the larger CARE community.

- *Global:* Share CARE’s 75-year history providing foreign assistance for poverty eradication, beginning after World War II and evolving to where it is today – working in over 100 countries, reaching more than 90 million people.
- *National:* In 2005, the CARE Action Network was developed nationwide to pressure the U.S. government to fulfill its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. Today, thousands of advocates represent CARE and develop relationships with Members of Congress to help move CARE’s mission forward.
- *Local:* Explain what the CARE community in your district or state has done to advance the issue or piece of legislation.



CARE’S STORY: Not sure how to talk about CARE and its mission? Visit [CARE’s YouTube channel](#) to familiarize yourself with CARE.

“Story of Now:” By telling a story of now, you communicate an urgent challenge you are called to face, the solution to the challenge, and the hopeful outcome we can create together by choosing to act now.

5. Action: You have built your story and now you need to give your audience a clear strategic choice they should make.

- Motivate them to join you for the next CARE meeting
- Ask your Member of Congress to sponsor or support legislation and give data backing up your ask.

6. Outcome: Don’t just leave it at the ask. Take it a step further and talk to them about the hopeful outcome that their choice/action would make.

- If they came to a CARE meeting, what would they gain in knowledge or in community?
- If legislation is passed, what would its impact be on-the-ground for women and girls?

“For me, the most effective advocacy tool is to relate things on a human level through stories – not just the stories of women and girls around the world who are benefitting from CARE’s programs, but also my personal story about why CARE’s issues are important to me and to other people in my district.”

– Katie Brunk, CARE Advocate, Illinois



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Worksheet: Identify the Elements

Let's dive into a few examples to see if you can identify the key elements of storytelling. Get a pen and some paper ready. Take a listen or read the examples below and see if you can answer some of the following questions:

- [President Obama's Speech at the 2004 DNC](#) (15 mins)
- [Harvey Milk's 1978 Speech, "You Cannot Live on Hope Alone"](#) (2 mins) *Trigger Warning – This video contains information about suicide which may be triggering to survivors.*
- [Tom Hanks' Op-Ed supporting a bill to fund community colleges](#)

The Challenge:

What was the specific challenge the storyteller faced?

Did the storyteller paint a vivid picture of those challenges? If so, how?

The Choice:

Was there a clear choice that was made in response to the challenge?

How did the choice make you feel? Hopeful? Angry?

The Outcome:

What was the specific outcome that resulted from the choice?

What does that outcome teach us?

What is the specific outcome if we act together?

Is there a clear and hopeful vision of the future if we act now?

The Values:

Could you identify what this person's values are and where they came from? How?

How did the story make you feel?

What values do you share with the storyteller?

The Details:

Were there sections of the story that had especially vivid details or images (sights, sounds, smells, or emotions) that drew you in?

Worksheet: Developing Your Story

Now that you know the structure and elements of a persuasive story, it's your turn to try! We suggest you choose a specific situation that you will be using your story for – recruiting in your community, meeting with Members of Congress, or Letters to the Editor – so you know your timing and issue focus.

When you tell your CARE story, here are some questions to keep in mind:

- When did you decide to be an advocate with CARE? Where were you? What happened? Who were you with?
- Why did you become advocate for CARE's issues?
- Where do your values come from? What challenges have you faced, and what choices have you made that illustrate your values and passions?
- What will you be calling on others to do? How will the world be different if more people take action?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that call you to advocate on these issues?

Family & Childhood	Life Choices	Organizing Experiences
Parents/Family Growing Up Your Community Role Models School	School Career Partner/Family Hobbies/Interests/Talents Faith Overcoming Challenge	First experience of organizing Connection to key books or people Role models

Think about the challenge, choice and outcome in your story. The outcome might be what you learned in addition to what happened. A story doesn't have to be dramatic to be effective. Use the boxes below to map out these three key parts of your story.

Challenge	Choice	Outcome

Now it's time to tie in your Story of Us and the Story of Now. Use the next few questions to lay out key points you want to include in your story.

Why is it urgent to act on your issue? What stories can you tell to make the challenge real for your audience? Visualize specific detailed experiences that you've seen or heard that reveal the challenges you face together—specific moments, events, sights, smells, sounds. Make the challenge concrete rather than abstract.

What's the outcome you want to achieve? How could the future look different if you act now? Why is this outcome hopeful and plausible? What specific people or events in your own community or around the world give you hope that this outcome can be achieved?

What specific, strategic, actionable choice are you asking people to make now?

3 Tips for Telling Your CARE Story

Write it down: Storytelling is challenging. Write your story down in a way that will keep you on track. Either quick bullet points or a full draft, do whatever is helpful for you.

Keep it short: Remember, you will usually only have under 3 minutes to tell your story. When you first craft your story, it will probably seem really long. Go through and edit several times. Then time yourself saying it out loud at a conversational pace.

Practice, practice, practice: It can be uncomfortable to talk about yourself or share some parts of your life with others. The more you do it, the more comfortable you'll feel. Practice with your Regional Advocacy Manager, friends, family or even in the mirror.



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CARE Stories: Example For Meeting with Member of Congress

Safe from the Start Example: 2:30 minutes

Hi, my name is Savannah Fox. I was born and raised in Atlanta, GA by a family of strong women who have been public educators in their communities going back 65 years. My mother just retired last year after 35 years as a public-school teacher in Dekalb county! I am so excited to be meeting with you to talk about the need for the Safe from the Start Act in the House of Representatives.

One of my most vivid memories growing up was the weekly phone call my mother would make sitting at our dark walnut kitchen table to my grandmother while something sweet baked in the oven. My grandmother was a teacher and librarian in Florida for over 30 years and one of the first white teachers who pushed for the desegregation of schools in the state. This was before cell phones with speaker phone functions, so I would sit on my mother's lap when I was small and then routinely pulled my chair up really close to my mother when I was older, so I could faintly hear my grandmother voice. While sometimes their conversations would stray to specific lesson plans, I was always intrigued by the fact their conversations focused more on the safety and enrichment of their communities. They spoke about how to make sure how their low-income students had the resources to succeed in school, how to make sure everyone had enough food or a safe place to go after school. As I grew up, I began to realize that the women in my life weren't just teachers restricted in their roles to the classroom, but they were our community leaders and some of the most effective drivers of sustainable change.

I joined CARE in 2017 and really found a home within the organization because it focuses so much women and girl's empowerment. We truly understand that a community cannot flourish unless women and girls are not only educated and safe but have the opportunity to become leaders like my mother and grandmother. That's why I was thrilled to hear the Safe from the Start Act has been introduced in the House. This Act will not only work to prevent and protect women and girls from gender-based violence, but it will prioritize the needs, voices and leadership of women during the crisis and in the rebuilding phases.

Women leaders have networks, cultural understanding and reach within their communities to access the most vulnerable. Because of this, we know that women and girls are uniquely positioned act as first responders and agents of change but are, unfortunately, often never consulted. This Act could change that.

I'm asking you to support the women leaders around the world by co-sponsoring the Safe from the Start Act today. If it passes, the U.S. Government would directly support building the capacity of women and women-led local organizations to create safer and more stable communities.