

Seven Steps to Sharing Your Story

1. Introduce yourself. Mention your name, town or city where you live, your association with NAMI FaithNet, the faith community and/or your occupation.

I'm (name). **I live in** (town or city) **and I'm a member of NAMI {Affiliate}**. **I'm also a** (name of occupation or member of a faith community).

2. Let your audience know you are affected by mental illness. This gives a "real face" to mental illness and recovery.

I (live with or am a relative/friend of someone who lives with or work with people who live with) **mental illness** (if possible, it helps audiences connect if you name a specific condition, like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression).

3. Let your audience know you will share your story.

I'm here today to share my story.

4. Tell your story. To tell your story effectively, answer the following questions in few sentences: **What happened? What helped? How are you different today?** If possible, note the role that spirituality or faith played in your/others' journey of recovery. Aim for about 10 sentences.

What happened before you got the help you needed?

Before I/we got the help I/we needed, I/we went through some (challenging, difficult, dark) **times. I/we ...** (felt hopeless, was in and out of hospitals, didn't have a place to live, felt abandoned, etc.)

What helped?

The support I/we get from my/our (faith community, support group, treatment program or professional) **has helped me/us manage living with mental illness.**

How are you different today? What is going right in your life?

Today, I am... (actively involved in sharing my story through FaithNet, a peer teacher with [program], hopeful, living a life of recovery).

5. Make your point. Help your audience connect your story with their own faith community by talking about how common mental illness is and the hope of recovery.

One in four adults is affected by a mental health disorder and one in seventeen will live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. But, recovery is possible.

6. Make your "ask." Let your audience know that they can offer hope and create a caring community by learning more about mental illness and organizations that can help.

Offer hope and create a caring community by learning more about mental illness and about organizations like NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, that can help.

NAMI FaithNet provides resources for all faith traditions and NAMI provides peer-led education courses and support groups for individuals and family members affected by the challenges of mental illness.

7. Say thank you. Always thank your audience for listening.

Thank you for listening and for your willingness to create a caring community for your members who experience mental illness.