



# SHARE YOUR STORY

## A How-to Guide for Digital Storytelling

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SUPPORTING THE RECOVERY AND HEALING OF SELF AND OTHERS  
THROUGH MESSAGES OF HOPE



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# Overview

Digital storytelling is all around us; videos, podcasts, and commercials use words paired with images to share meaningful stories with a wide range of people. Digital storytelling helps us connect to people no matter where they are located. We can learn a great deal about each other from our smart phones, tablets, and computers.

This guide is designed to help *individuals* living with mental and substance use disorders share personal stories of recovery using a digital format.

## **Why should you share your story? Because:**

- **It helps to reduce negative attitudes and stereotypes,**
- **It may encourage others to seek help, and**
- **It can be a healing and empowering experience for you, too.**

Using a digital format allows you to share your story in a powerful way with a wider community online.

Digital storytelling may seem intimidating, but really there are simple tools you use in your daily life that can also be used to create a digital story. Many other resources are available and identified in this guide.

Using the information in this how-to guide, you can plan, organize, and make your own digital story of recovery, even if you've never done it before.

In this guide you will find:

- Ways to choose your story idea, frame your message, and write your outline
- Step-by-step planning tools to help you prepare and make your final project
- Tips for recording video with your mobile device
- Free and easy places where you can post and share your story online

**Happy storytelling!**

# Getting Started

Sharing stories is a great way to connect with people. In hearing a story, you may relate to another person and identify with their situation. Digital storytelling adds to regular storytelling by allowing the storyteller to include images, pictures, music, and other things to their story.

This guide can help you plan, organize, and make a digital story. It includes helpful, easy-to-use resources for each stage of the process.

## How to Use this Guide

The great thing about digital storytelling is that you don't need to be an expert to do it. Anybody can develop a short video that shows their unique experience, using tools they already likely have. If you are interested in sharing your story, this guide can help you create a digital story that reflects *your* voice and *your* story.

## Impact

Stories engage people by making a topic relatable. Digital storytelling uses different things like video, audio, and pictures to show the story in a unique way. The format of digital stories and the way they can be shared creates an emotional connection to the topic, inviting people to engage with a story and take action as a result of seeing it.



Beyond being a fun and rewarding experience for you, your story can help others by showing them that they are not alone, treatment works, and recovery is possible.

# Getting Started (continued)

## Benefits

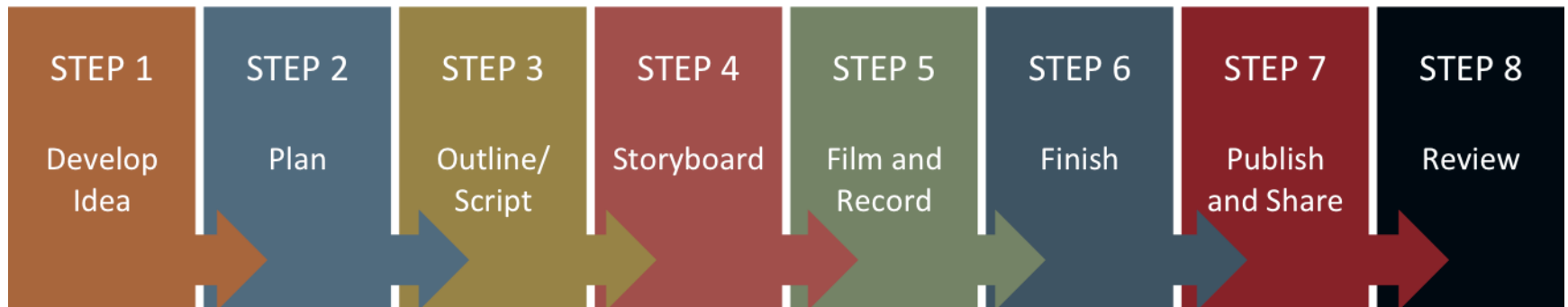
Digital storytelling is something anyone can do no matter what level of experience they have telling stories or using technology. It allows people to share their stories of recovery in creative ways. In sharing their own messages of healing, storytellers can support the recovery and healing of others.

Negative attitudes about mental health are reduced and help seeking is increased when people have positive interactions with other people who have behavioral health conditions. The process of sharing one's recovery experience can be a healing and empowering exercise for storytellers, as well.



Think about a time when someone's story helped you. How did it help? What made the story useful or memorable?

# Making a Digital Story





# DEVELOP IDEA

# Step 1: Develop Idea

The first step in making a digital story is figuring out an idea for the recovery story you'd like to tell. If you're not sure, you can do different activities to get the creative juices flowing, like:

- Brainstorming or drawing your ideas
- Listening and reading for topics
- Scanning lists and photos
- Thinking about your personal knowledge, experience, and recovery journey
- Asking friends, family, teachers, or coworkers

Once you have a few topics, ask yourself the following questions about each one:

- What is my connection to this topic?
- Is it motivating to an audience?
- Is it relatable?
- Can I tell this story in just a few minutes?
- What sort of work do I need to do to be able to tell this story? (e.g., do I need to do background research or gather details from other people?)
- Is there supporting material (e.g., photos, data, video) that I can use to help tell my story?

The answers to the questions will help you decide which story idea may be right for this project.



Step 1: Develop Idea

# YOUR TURN

What are some story ideas you'd like to share?

What is your connection to this topic?

- Is it motivating to an audience?
- Is it relatable?
- Can you tell this story in just a few minutes?
- What sort of preparation do you need to do to be able to tell this story? (E.g., do you need to gather details from other people or conduct any background research?)
- Is there supporting material (e.g., photos, data, video) that you can use to help tell your story?

Step 1: Develop Idea

# YOUR TURN (continued)

What is your story topic?



# Step 2: Plan

## Develop a plan

Once you have an idea for a story, you can develop a plan to help organize both your thoughts and resources. Think about how you would like to tell your story and the people that would benefit most from hearing it. Set goals that connect with your storytelling process but remember – the main goal is to share your experience of recovery. Some helpful first steps might be:

- Set a timeline for each step of the digital storytelling process
- Create check-in days to track your progress
- Record your successes

See page 16 for a planning guide.

## Define the purpose

Why do people share personal stories? Think about a time when you were inspired by someone's story. What made the story unique? How did it make you

feel? What was the message? Reflect on what you hope to achieve by sharing *your* story and frame your message to answer questions like the ones mentioned above. For example:

- What impact might your story have on other people?
- What makes your story unique?
- Are you trying to inform, convince, or question your audience? Think about other meaningful stories and what purpose they served.
- What do you hope your audience will do, think, or feel after watching your video? For example, do you want people to sign up for an activity or join a group? Do you want them to seek treatment and/or services? Would you like people to contact you about your story? Do you want others to share your story a certain way, or inspire them to share their own story?

# Step 2: Plan (continued)

## Set goals

Set goals for your planning process. These goals help to track your progress and provide a snapshot of the project from start to finish. Your goals can include items like finishing an outline or finding a tool or resource. Simple goals will help keep this project manageable.

## Identify audiences

Your story can show people who have behavioral health conditions that there are hopeful, inspiring stories of recovery out in the world. It is important, then, to think about people as you frame your story. Decide who you are trying to reach so you know how to speak to them on a more personal level.

Focus on who you think your story speaks to most and share details of your recovery journey that they can relate to. Does your story include views of a certain age group? A particular community of color or religion? Knowing your target audience is an important part of creating a relatable, successful story.

## Get resources

This guide identifies some resources to help with making a digital story, but there are many other things available on the internet, at your local library, or even where you work. There are often people in our life who can help, too – ask around if you need a certain expert or tool.

Some basic technology resources include:

- A recording device (such as a smart phone, video camera, or microphone)
- A way to put the pieces together (such as PowerPoint or editing apps)
- An online home for your video (such as a YouTube account)
- A way to share it (such as social media accounts or email)

# Step 2: Plan (continued 2)

## Think about access

As you make your digital story, think about how it will be accessed. How might people who are not able to hear or see experience your story? You can take a few extra steps (such as providing a transcript) to make your story available to them, too.

Section 508 is a law requiring the federal government to offer all people, including those with disabilities, the ability to access government products like videos or reports. For a video to be accessible, the person watching it must be able to understand what is happening in both the visual and audio portions of the video. An accessible video means that a person can understand the message, no matter his or her disability. Step 7 explains how to do this.

Must your story be accessible? No, unless you are creating it for a government organization. Is it a recommended best practice? Yes.

# Step 2: Plan (continued 3)

## Disclosure

Deciding whether to share your recovery story publicly is a very personal decision, and you are the only person who can decide whether it is the right choice. Think about what might happen after sharing your story and weigh the pros and cons. The Honest, Open, Proud Program\* recommends the following activities:

Consider the pros and cons of sharing your story

- **Identity.** Think about your identity and your mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Do you view yourself as a person with a behavioral health condition? You can decide how you frame your identity.
- **Costs and Benefits.** Write down the costs and benefits of disclosing your story so you can decide whether or not to share, or how much to share. Costs include reasons why you might regret sharing your story. Benefits include reasons why sharing your story will help you or others.
- **Goals.** What do you hope to achieve by telling your story? Write out your goals.
- **Expectations.** What do you expect will happen after you've told your story? In what positive or negative ways are you expecting people to react? How will you handle their reactions?
- **Support.** Sharing your story of recovery publicly is a big deal, especially if this is the first time you're sharing it. With so many emotions involved, it can be a difficult decision to make alone. Is there someone in your life (e.g., family members, counselors, peers) who can support you in making a decision?

\*For more information, see page 70.



“Don’t dismiss any cost or benefit no matter how silly it may seem. Put them all on the list so that you can consider all advantages and disadvantages together.”

*Honest, Open, Proud to Eliminate the Stigma of Mental Illness manual, 2015, p.26*

Step 2: Plan

# YOUR TURN

**Purpose:** Why are you telling this story?

What impact might your story have on other people?



Step 2: Plan

# YOUR TURN (continued)

**Goals:** What do you want to achieve by telling this story?

**Audience:** Who must you reach to achieve your goals?

Step 2: Plan

# YOUR TURN (continued 2)

**Permission:** Step back and ask yourself if you're ready to share your story publicly. Make a list of the benefits and drawbacks if you're not sure.

**Benefits:**

**Drawbacks:**

If your role is to help another person tell his or her story, make sure you have informed them about the process and received permission (preferably signed permission) to film and share the story.

Step 2: Plan

# YOUR TURN (continued 3)

**Resources:** What do you need to complete this project?

*Note: you may want to review all of the steps in the guide first and then return to answer this question.*

Step 2: Plan

# YOUR TURN (continued 3)

**Timeline:** By when do you want to complete this project? List your target deadlines for each step:

Step 1: Develop Idea

Step 2: Plan

Step 3: Outline/script

Step 4: Storyboard

Step 5: Film and Record

Step 6: Finalize

Step 7: Publish and Share

Step 8: Evaluate

*Note: you may want to review all of the steps in the guide first and then return to answer this question.*



# OUTLINE/SCRIPT

# Step 3: Outline/Script

The outline for a digital story is a key part of the process. Having a well thought-out, written or drawn outline helps reach goals related to time and purpose. If you plan to use an interviewer, develop the outline together so that you and the interviewer are comfortable with the script and can create a great product.

Storytellers often seem the most honest if they are able to speak off the cuff from an outline rather than reading word-for-word from notes. Choose an outlining method that is comfortable for you and helps you reach your goals.

An outline template is available on page 30.

## Frame your story

You want to set up your digital story to be engaging for people. As a storyteller, it is helpful to give details for your story to help people understand your view.

Here are things to keep in mind when framing a story of recovery:

- What is unique about your story?
- Remember that you own your story. While it is important for the story to be honest, it is also important to share your experience in a way that feels comfortable for you.
- Digital stories are only a few minutes long, so you should think about which details are most important to include in order to communicate your message.

### EXAMPLE

Sarah struggled with substance abuse for years, from high school into adulthood. It wasn't until she became a mother that she was finally able to get treatment and begin her recovery journey. Rather than explain her earlier struggles in her story, she chooses to focus in on the time before and after becoming a mother – where the combination of a great recovery program and the experience of raising a baby inspired her to leave drugs and alcohol in the past. She feels this part of her story is relatable. Sarah wants to reach out to young women and young mothers, especially those who face addiction challenges, with her story.

# Step 3: Outline/Script (continued)

## Writing and drawing exercises

Writing and drawing exercises, like any kind of warm-up routine before playing a sport or a musical instrument, help loosen up your imagination while honing your writing muscles. Exercises can be done alone or in small or large groups. These exercises can be an easy way to help storytellers think creatively about how to tell a story of recovery. For example, if you are feeling stuck while writing, try one of these exercises:

- Shift to another of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste)
- Look at things from close to far away or from high to low (or vice versa)
- Tell the story from another person's point of view
- Answer who, what, when, where, why, and how
- Draw out your ideas and use them to create a story
- Create a scrapbook to organize photos, words, and other materials
- Select a photo and write a story about it



An organized story will help people to:

- Understand it
- Believe it
- Remember it

# Step 3: Outline/Script (continued 2)

## Tips for making great digital stories

### *Truthful*

Stories are powerful if they are honest and real. While you don't want your story to feel rehearsed, you should still plan what you want to say and how you would like to say it. The story should show your voice and personality. A thoughtful and organized story allows for a smooth delivery. It will also give your story a polished and truthful feel.

### *Strength*

In order for stories of recovery to have a positive impact on others, storytellers should share their experience from a strong foundation of recovery. When framing your story, you should honestly talk about your experience, but also focus on the strengths that have helped in your recovery.



# Step 3: Outline/Script (continued 3)

## Tips for making great digital stories

### *Plot*

Digital storytelling allows for creativity. While there is no single format that stories need to follow, here are some things to consider. Including these parts helps to engage audiences. For example:

- Stories with impact have an “attention getter” early on that draws people in. Maybe this is a memory or emotion that grabs a storyteller’s experience.
- A storyteller might choose to link their personal experience to something that may be shared by a community, or by the viewers, to show how things can be accomplished together.
- Good digital stories include messages of hope or a “call-to-action.” A call-to-action is an instruction to the audience that inspires a response, such as “call now,” “find out more,” or “visit our website.” A call-to-action can help people understand that they can recover too, just like you. Examples include:
  - [Recovery Month Stories](#) (SAMHSA)
  - [Campaign to Change Direction](#) (Coalition)
  - [Start the Conversation. End the Stigma](#) (Bring Change 2 Mind)
  - [Make the Connection](#) (Department of Veterans Affairs)
  - [Be Ready to Talk with Your Family](#) (Time to Change Campaign, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness)

### CALL-TO-ACTION EXAMPLES

“A Chinese proverb says ‘a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.’ I hope you can take your first step and keep moving forward in your recovery journey.”

“If you or someone you know has a mental health problem, there are ways to get help. Please visit [mentalhealth.gov](http://mentalhealth.gov) for more information.”

# Step 3: Outline/Script (continued 4)

## Tips for making great digital stories

### *Length*

Digital stories are usually short. StoryCenter, a nonprofit organization that partners with organizations on digital storytelling projects, recommends a length of two to five minutes with no more than 20 images or video segments and a word count of between 250 and 375. These guidelines help make sure that stories capture and hold the attention of their audiences, especially if they are shared on social media. Viewers should be able to easily watch digital stories and feel empowered to take action as a result.



### The ideal digital story:

- Two to five minutes long
- No more than 20 images or video segments
- Word count of between 250 and 375.

# Step 3: Outline/Script (continued 5)

## Practice telling your story

### ***On your own***

Once you've jotted some notes or an outline for your story, you'll want to practice telling your story out loud. As you talk, you'll notice areas that might need to be fixed. Work on the rhythm and tempo of your story to create interest. In the book "[Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community](#)"\*, author Joe Lambert said, "*Good stories breathe. They move along generally at an even pace, but once in a while they stop. They take a deep breath and proceed.*"

### ***With others***

Story circles are a place where you can share your story with others. Circles are used to create a place for storytellers to express their personal stories and

a support space for those going through recovery. People can learn to listen and learn to understand others through story circles.

Story circles are good for practicing or sharing your stories and receiving feedback. The story circle is like a screening of a video used by film producers to find out how audiences respond to their story and how they can make it better. Feedback can range from how the story is being told to the how it is organized. This gives the storyteller new views and ideas.

If you don't know of any story circles in your community, you can create an informal one by sharing your story with a small group of friends or coworkers to gain helpful feedback. Going through a storytelling exercise will help you to organize your thoughts and improve your skills.

\*For more information, please see page 69.

Step 3: Outline/Script

# YOUR TURN

**Frame:** What is unique about your story of recovery?

What are the most important points to tell in just a few minutes?

## Step 3: Outline/Script

**YOUR TURN** (continued)**Writing and Drawing Exercises:**

- Shift to another of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste)
- Look at things from close to far away or from high to low (or vice versa)
- Tell the story from another person's point of view
- Answer who, what, when, where, why, and how
- Draw out your ideas and use them to create a story
- Create a scrapbook to organize photos, words, and other materials
- Select a photo and write a story about it.

## Step 3: Outline/Script

**YOUR TURN** (continued 2)**Sample Outline:****1. Beginning**

- a. Get your audience's attention and motivate them to listen
- b. Offer some background information about the topic
- c. Highlight your experience
- d. Set the tone for the story
- e. Preview main ideas
- f. Move to the body of the story

**2. Body**

- a. Organize your main points (usually 2-5 for a story that is less than 5 minutes long)
- b. Make sure main points support the purpose of your story
- c. Include support material

**3. End**

- a. Summarize your main points
- b. Finish the circular journey by connecting your beginning and end
- c. Use a strong closing statement to show the video is over



# STORYBOARD

# Step 4: Storyboard

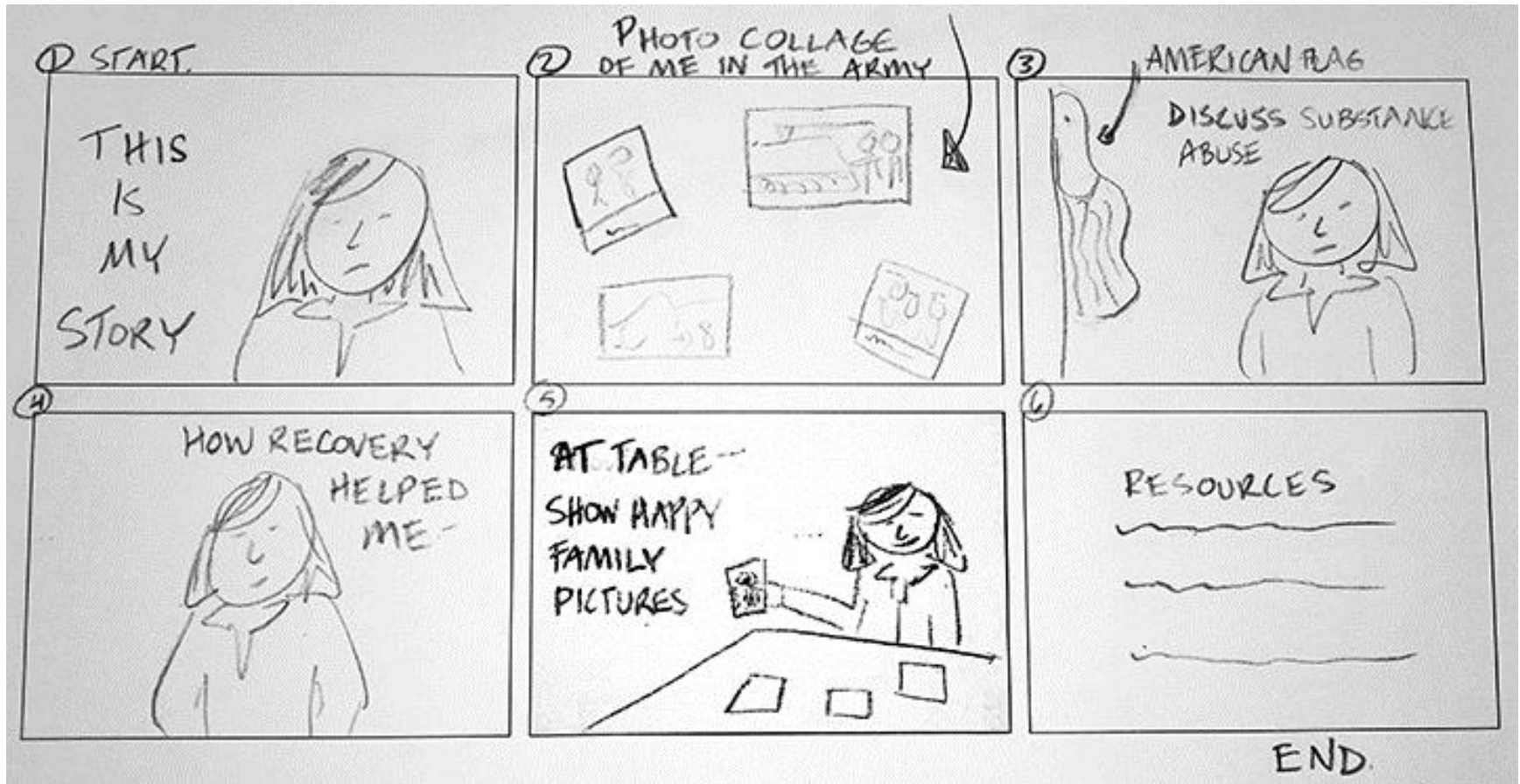
Storyboarding refers to a way of planning for all the things that will appear in the digital story, such as music, pictures, words, text, photos, and video. Storyboards help storytellers to picture the entire story from start to finish.

Storyboards are created in the order of things that happened and help to show what things will appear in the video, and when. They often inspire new ideas for organization or visual effects, show gaps, and help improve the video's quality. Think about the place where you will be filming or recording and any challenges you may need to address (e.g., lighting, noise, background).

Creating a storyboard can be as simple as sketching out your plans on paper. If you prefer to use your computer, Microsoft Word or PowerPoint are other options, along with many software programs or apps for the more advanced developer.



# Step 4: Storyboard (continued)



This example storyboard shows all the things that will appear in the digital story, such as music, pictures, words, text, photos, and video. Storyboards help storytellers to picture the entire story from start to finish.

Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN

What does your story look like visually? Sketch out your ideas below, or create your own.

1

What's your first shot:

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Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN (continued)

2



What's happening

now: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN (continued 2)

3

And now:

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Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN (continued 3)

4

And now:

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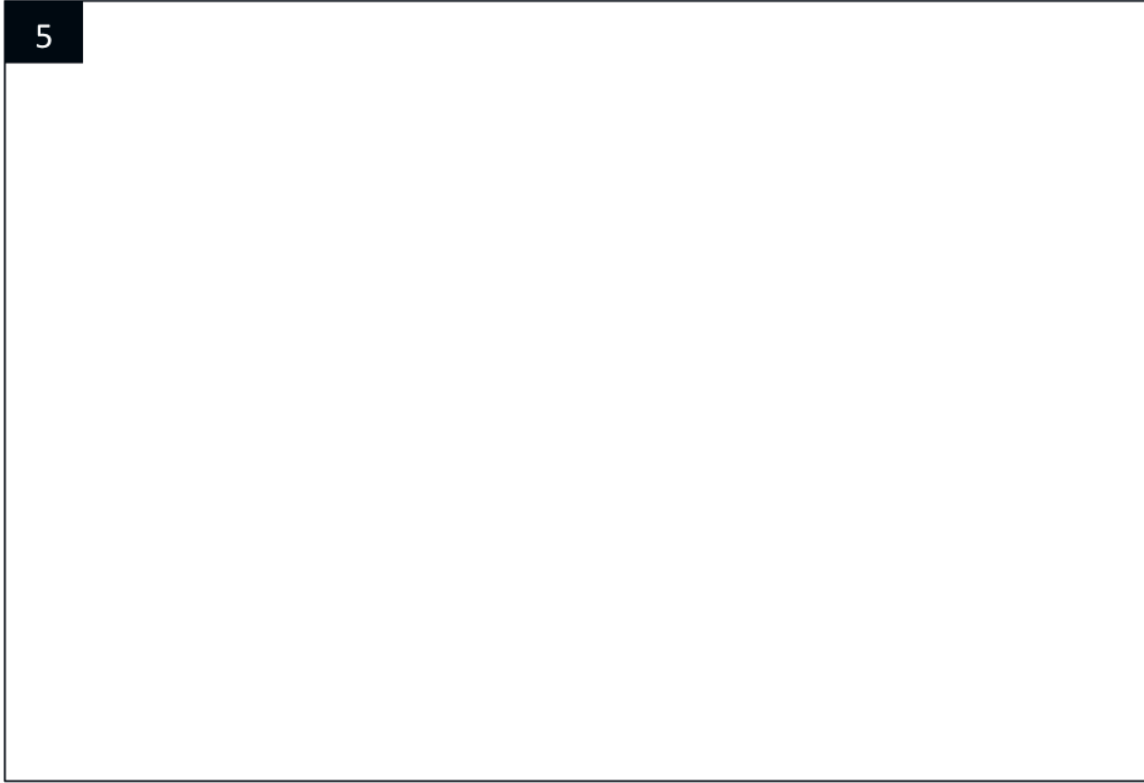
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Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN (continued 4)

5



And now:

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Step 4: Storyboard

# YOUR TURN (continued 5)

6

Last shot! How does  
your story end?

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# FILM AND RECORD



# Step 5: Film and Record

Sometimes you'll want to film yourself, or a storyteller, or a storyteller and an interviewer together. For this step, you'll need some tools, including a way to record video and audio (e.g., video camera with microphones). You can certainly use a smart phone or tablet, but a video camera and microphones usually result in better quality.

Before recording, practice using the tools so you know how to use them. Film in a quiet place and make sure the lights are bright enough to see the person but not too bright that they appear washed out.

If you are using a microphone, move its position to get the best sound, usually about seven inches from the speaker's mouth. If you're filming someone rather than yourself, show the person where to look at the camera (i.e., at the lens) and talk with them about how you'll start and stop the filming.

Try filming a few "takes" (brief test shots) to work out any issues with sound, video, or delivery. Don't worry about making small mistakes as they can be fixed later. If you'll be recording audio, remember to test the tools first before recording.



## TIPS FOR APPEARING ON CAMERA

- Try practicing your questions and answers aloud before the interview.
- Keep clothing simple and "you"; avoid busy patterns
- Avoid noisy jewelry or attire; these can disturb microphones and be distracting to viewers.
- Be relaxed and have fun! Your message is the most important part of the interview.

# Step 5: Film and Record (continued)

## Adding visual and audio parts

Digital stories can have different visual and audio options, such as photos, video clips, text on the screen, voices, or a video of the storyteller. These things add interest to a story and help give attention to certain things.

- **Visual parts:** This includes taking photos and video, scanning old photos or drawings, and collecting images and materials from other locations.
- **Audio parts:** This includes recording and editing voices, and recording or finding music or sound effects.

Know the limits and abilities of your video tools so you can plan properly in the storyboarding phase. A sample of tools is available on page 46.

You should also be aware of copyright rules. While it's tempting to include photos, music, or videos you've found on the web, many of these items may be protected by copyright. If you plan to use things you've found online, get permission first. You can contact the owner directly, or try to contact the site where you found the content. You should also cite your sources so the owner gets credit and the viewers know where the material came from. There are many ways to cite work – you could say it in a video, or create a caption for a photo – whatever works best for your story format.

For more details about fair use and copyright laws, please review [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov) and [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org).

Step 5: Film and Record

# YOUR TURN

**Resources.** What tools do you have? What tools do you need?

**Visual and audio parts:** Are you including sound clips, photos, or music? What are they and where will you get them? How will you add them to your story?

**Prepare and test:** Remember to film or record a few tests to make sure things work.



**FINISH**

# Step 6: Finish

## Editing

The editing phase is where the planning and recording come together. This is where you combine visual and audio parts to create a final product.

### ***Choosing the right tools***

There are many tools available to make and share stories; it is not limited to any particular technology. Storytellers do not have to use professional tools – sometimes a smartphone is all you need. Free software or apps might fit your needs just as well as, or better than, paid software or apps. Mostly, you want find a tool that matches the purpose of the project, the skills of the storytellers, the available resources, and the needs of the target audience.

There are many resources available on the internet, at your local library or college, or likely even where you work. There are probably people in your life who can help, too – ask around if you're unfamiliar with these sorts of tools.

### ***Helpful tools for new storytellers***

Some storytellers might already be comfortable with certain tools, software, or apps. Others might be new to digital storytelling and nervous about the learning curve. The good news is that there are many tools available for digital storytelling that provide basic features a novice can typically master in a short period of time.

The tools listed in the following tables are commonly-used options for novice- to intermediate-level computer and app users. They provide basic tools to edit and produce videos on different platforms, such as Mac, PC, or mobile devices. There are many options available beyond this list– if storytellers are interested in (or already comfortable using) certain tools they should go ahead and use them.

# Step 6: Finish (continued)

Video Editing Software	Description
<a href="#"><u>iMovie</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free video editing software for Mac Operating Systems</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Windows Movie Maker</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free video editing software for Windows and PC</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Animoto</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$10 monthly subscription fee</li><li>• Available for use on OSX, PC, Android, and iOS platforms</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Blender</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full production suite for post-production effects, graphics, etc.</li><li>• Steep learning curve, must understand video editing and production</li></ul>

Audio Recording and Editing Software	Description
<a href="#"><u>Audacity</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creates high quality MP3 files</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>SoundCloud</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Record up to 3 hours of content directly to your phone</li></ul>

Photo Editing Software	Description
<a href="#"><u>Aviary Photo Editor</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free mobile apps for Android and iOS</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Paint.net</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evolution of the original Windows Paint program</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Pixlr</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works with Windows, OS X, iOS and Android platforms</li></ul>

Step 6: Finish

# YOUR TURN

**Tools:** What tools are you using to edit and put your story together?



# PUBLISH AND SHARE



# Step 7: Publish and Share

## Creating a home online

Once your video is done, you need to create a home for it. Video files are very large, often too large to share via email. Optimally the home will be online, such as a personal website or blog, social media pages, or a video-specific hosting tool such as YouTube, Vimeo, or Wistia. It is useful to create a home base for the video and to share links with people to view it.

## Access

The video sharing site YouTube is not only a free and common way to publish your story online, but it also offers tools to make sure your video is accessible to people who may have disabilities and use assistive devices. You can include a typed transcript to be published with your video. Transcripts appear as “closed captioning” on YouTube’s website.

## Engaging your audiences

Digital stories are great for reaching people through social media. Compared with text or image posts, social media posts that include videos receive more interaction such as likes, comments, and shares.

Hashtags (#) on both Facebook and Twitter are used to mark keywords or topics and categorize posts. You can use several hashtags to link digital stories to conversations on behavioral health, or create a hashtag of your own. Examples include:

- #mentalhealth
- #suicideprevention
- #recovery
- #mhsm (mental health social media)
- #SoberUSA
- #CADAchat (open community of individuals speaking out about addiction, behavioral disorders, treatment, recovery, and more)

# Step 7: Publish and Share (continued)

Share a link to your story on a variety of channels. The key is to use channels that connect you with your target audience.

## EXAMPLE:

Sam's story is about treatment and recovery related to PTSD, and he wants to reach people who also may have experienced PTSD. Sam doesn't have a large online presence but he wants to give it a try. He opens a YouTube account and uploads his story. Then he shares his story on his Facebook page (his only social media account).

How can Sam share his story more widely to help achieve his goal? He could:

- Ask coworkers and professional and personal contacts to share his story to help reach more people.
- Contact local or national behavioral health organizations through their Facebook pages to alert them to his story.
- Email or call organizations and ask if they would consider sharing a link to his story in their newsletters or on their social media channels. Sam makes a list of organizations in his community that have access to people who would benefit from hearing his story. They include:
  - Veteran Service Organizations
  - University counseling centers
  - Social services
  - Mental health clinics
  - Hospitals
  - Non-profit organizations
  - Influential bloggers related to your story topic
  - Members of the media
  - Peer-run programs and/or organizations

# Step 7: Publish and Share (continued 2)

## Reflection

After you've told your story, take a minute to reflect on the experience. How did it feel to tell your story? How do you feel about responses from others? How will you use this experience to move forward in your recovery journey?

## Step 7: Publish and Share

# YOUR TURN

**Video Home:** Where is your video going to “live” online?

**Sharing:** What options do you have for sharing your story?

- Personal website
- Personal blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Tumblr
- Other? \_\_\_\_\_

Who can help you to share your story and reach your target audiences? (For example: Veterans Service Organizations, University counseling centers, social services, clinics, hospitals, non-profit organizations, influential bloggers, members of the media)

Step 7: Publish and Share

# YOUR TURN (continued)

**Reflection:** How did it feel to tell your story?

How do you feel about responses from others?

How will you use this experience to move forward in your recovery journey



# REVIEW

# Step 8: Review

Now that you've made and shared your story, would you like to know what sort of impact you had?

Start with your original goals for the project. What did you hope to do? You can collect information on how many people viewed your video, where those people are located, and many other details. You can also review comments (if available) to see how your story is being received and shared. There is no single measurement that defines how engaging your digital story is. But there are many things you can review to see if your video did what you hoped it would do. Reviewing your work doesn't mean comparing your digital story to another person's digital story, either. It is a measure of how well you met your goals.

# Step 8: Review (continued)

## Reach

What you need to understand first is whether your story is reaching the right people. You need a tool or tools that will answer the following questions:

- Is your digital story being viewed?
- Is it getting to people in a timely manner?
- Is it reaching the right people?

Three ways to get that data include:

- **Social Media Stats:** Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and most other social media platforms have ways for users to be able to understand how people are engaging (or not) with their content. Some simple measures include the number of likes, retweets, or comments you receive when you post something. More complex measurements are also available for advanced users.
- **Email Stats:** When sharing a digital story via email, using an emailing tool such as [MailChimp](#) allows you to view useful information such as how many times people opened your email, how often they clicked through to the video, and if any of the email addresses didn't work.
- **Traffic Stats:** You can track traffic on your personal or organizational website using tools like [Omniture](#), [Google Analytics](#), or [WebTrends](#). Are people clicking on stories posted on your site? How long are they watching videos? Are they downloading, commenting, sharing, etc.? Are they clicking into other areas of your site?



# Step 8: Review (continued)

## Results

Now that you have gathered information on the numbers of people your story has reached, let's discuss how you might measure the results of sharing your digital story. This helps you figure out what people remember after viewing your story of recovery.

The following questions help us get a better understanding:

How did the audience understand the message, and did they understand it correctly?

How did the message change their feelings, habits, opinions, etc.?

How did the story impact the way they think about something (e.g., recovery, behavioral health)?

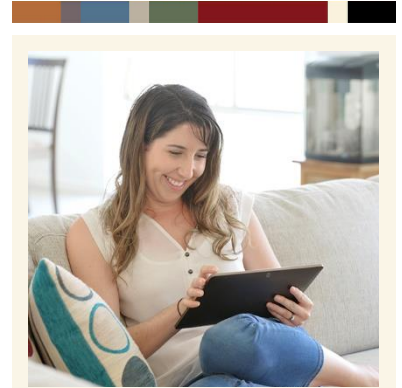
Here are some options to do this:

The simplest method of gathering this information is to ask these questions of the people with whom you shared your story.

Create an easy poll or survey on social networks

Review what's being said about your story online (this is called "social listening")

The idea here is to look at everything from whether people can and do remember your story in association with other relevant ideas or concepts. It can be an interesting look at whether the story is in people's minds in the ways that matter to you.



Regular "pulse checks" of audience attitudes may be able to show how thoughts change over time.

# Step 8: Review (continued 2)

## Action

When you shared your story, what did you hope people would do with what they learned? As a storyteller, not only can you take someone on a journey by having them listen to your story, but also you can inspire them to reflect, change, and act.

Some questions to consider:

- In viewing your story, do people feel recovery is possible?
- Are they changing their thoughts on recovery or making life changes towards recovery?
- Do people feel connected to your story, and does this help them feel supported in their recovery?
- Do people feel hope for their loved ones who may have behavioral health conditions?

Sometimes people share their story for a specific reason; they hope to bring attention to something, or launch a program or event, or connect with a

certain group of people, or promote healing and recovery. You can issue a call-to-action that best fits your message. Do you want people to sign up for an activity or join a group? Would you like people to contact you about your story? Do you want others to share your story a certain way, or inspire them to share their own story?

A call-to-action is an instruction to the audience that inspires a response, usually using a verb, such as “share this story,” “find out more,” or “visit our website.” For example, an outcome for a digital story about PTSD recovery may be to increase audience awareness by inspiring them visit a page on your website to get more information. Another outcome might be to inspire audience members to share their own story of recovery with you or with others.

# Step 8: Review (continued 3)

One way to measure the success of your call is to give people a few options for action and see which of those actions gains the most traction. This way, you give people the option to select a way to engage with your story that is most comfortable for them, and you can also see which of your options performs the best (and get rid of actions that do not perform as well).

Another outcome may be to increase the number of people who show treatment-seeking behavior for a condition; such as college students getting help for binge drinking. The call-to-action would be to encourage them to call a certain phone number or take a diagnose quiz on a website. Ways to measure action could include clinic intake information (e.g.,

rates of people citing the video when asked “how did you hear about us?”), and reviewing the number of quiz takers.

If you have website, you might also want to take a look at website traffic (available through Google Analytics or your web log files). Data such as how long people spend in each area, what pages they visit, and how much they download or share the information you provide are all measures of action. How much time is spent on a page can show us what viewers find most interesting or where they find helpful information. The number of downloads or shares can show whether you have made it easy for people to do these things.

Step 8: Review

# YOUR TURN

**What were your original goals for this project?**

Step 8: Review

# YOUR TURN (continued)

**Reach:** Is your story reaching your target audience?

Sample questions:

- Is your digital story being viewed?
- Is it getting to people in a timely manner?
- Is it reaching the right people?

How are you going to gather this information?

What did you find out?

Step 8: Review

# YOUR TURN (continued 2)

**Results:** What are the takeaways from the message you're trying to tell?

Sample questions:

- How did the audience understand the message?
- How did the message change their habits, opinions, etc.?
- How did the story impact their view towards something (e.g., recovery, behavioral health)?

How are you going to gather this information?

What did you find out?

## Step 8: Review

# YOUR TURN

 (continued 3)

**Action:** Did your story cause people to act or react in a certain way?

Sample questions:

- In viewing your story, do people feel recovery is possible?
- Are they changing their ideas on recovery or making life changes towards recovery?
- Do people feel connected to your story and does this help them feel supported in their recovery?
- Do people feel hope for their loved ones who may have behavioral health conditions?
- Did your story cause people to act or react in a certain way?

How are you going to gather this information?

What did you find out?

# A Note for Organizations

Digital storytelling is something anyone can do no matter what level of experience they have telling stories or using technology. Digital storytelling is a way for people to share their experiences in creative ways. By sharing their own messages of healing, storytellers can support the recovery and healing of others.

Storytelling is also a useful way to help organizations advance their missions and conduct outreach. “Contact-based” interventions connect people with other people who are in recovery from a mental illness or substance use disorder. They can be used

to reduce negative attitudes about mental illness and substance use disorders and encourage people to seek help, treatment services, and/or support. The process of sharing one’s recovery experience through stories can be a healing and empowering exercise for storytellers, as well.

While individuals can create their own digital stories, organizations can play an important role in coordinating storytelling efforts, supporting storytellers, and improving the reach of digital stories.



# A Note for Organizations (continued)

## Resources

If digital storytelling is something you wish to do on a regular basis at your organization, you may want to consider dedicating the time of one or more employees to coordinate this project. The process of planning, making, and sharing stories needs focused time and attention.

If you are planning to assign someone in your organization to coordinate a storytelling project or collect multiple stories, the following skills can be helpful:

- Facilitation
- Communication
- Interviewing
- Listening
- Managing space (e.g., a classroom)
- Ability to help frame stories
- Cultural sensitivity
- Comfort with learning about and using storytelling tools

If assigned by your organization to coordinate storytelling, you should work together and develop an informed consent process that aligns with the organization's policies that would support digital storytelling efforts.

# A Note for Organizations (continued 2)

## Informed Consent

Disclosure (i.e., informed consent) is more than signing a form—it's about helping storytellers to understand the risks and benefits involved with sharing their stories publicly. If you are collecting digital storytelling on behalf of your organization, some recommended steps may include:

- Share information about the storytelling process so storytellers can make an informed decision about whether to share their stories. This information should include (but is not limited to):
  - A detailed explanation of the steps of the story development process
  - A detailed explanation of how their story will be used, including the potential audiences it might reach
  - Identification of the potential benefits and drawbacks of sharing their story publicly, as well as a plan to protect them as storytellers (e.g., making social media

profiles private, how you'll handle requests from the media)

- Ideas on what to expect after their stories are shared
- Get signed permission from storytellers
- Get signed permission if the nature of the story development or distribution process changes from the way it was initially described (e.g. in the case of media requests)
- Regularly check in with the storytellers and providing opportunities to update the information in the stories when possible
- Allow the storytellers to end their disclosure permission at any time

A sample consent form is included as a reference. You are also encouraged to follow your organization's informed consent policy and procedures.

# A Note for Organizations (continued 3)

## Sample Video Consent and Release Form

I agree to allow [organization/person] to use my image and likeness and/or any interview statements from me in its publications. This includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Permission to interview, film, photograph, tape, or make a video copy of me and/or record my voice;
- (b) Permission to use my name; and
- (c) Permission to use quotes from the interview(s) (or parts of such quotes), the film, photograph(s), tape(s) or reproduction(s) of me, and/or recording of my voice, in part or in whole, in its publications, for education and awareness.

I've received an explanation regarding how the story will be developed and used, and am aware of the potential benefits and drawbacks to sharing my story publicly.

This consent is given indefinitely, and does not require prior approval by me. However, I am able to withdraw my consent at any time by contacting [organization/person].

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The below signed parent or legal guardian of the above-named minor child hereby consents to and gives permission to the above on behalf of such minor child.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Person Responsible for Digital Story \_\_\_\_\_

# Summary

Digital storytelling is a great way to share your personal story of recovery, as it can reach many others who can relate to and can be helped by your experiences. Your story can educate and give hope to people who are on their own path to recovery, too.

A few important reminders as you begin:

- Use this guide to develop a plan – think about your purpose and who you'd like to reach.
- Explore resources and select what works best for you.
- Develop a simple outline and storyboard to help you organize your thoughts and presentation.
- Create your digital story using simple tools like your mobile phone, a digital camera, and free apps.

- Upload your story to the web, share it with your network, and ask for feedback from people you trust.

Using this guide, you can make a compelling digital story that can be shared with family, friends, and community members. It can help them understand that your recovery story is an important part of your life and that it can also be encouraging for others.

With the help of simple technology tools and tips for structuring your words, making your digital story of recovery is an exciting and rewarding project that can be shared and used in many ways. Your voice will bring the project to life, so go ahead and get started!

# Resources: Videos and Articles

Here are some helpful tools, links, and resources

## Videos

- **SAMHSA Personal Recovery Stories**  
<http://www.recoverymonth.gov/personal-stories>
- **Inspire: How One Member Found Support and Hope**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy66CdIfpaA>
- **Mentalhealth.gov: Stories of Hope and Recovery**  
<http://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/recovery/index.html>
- **Your Voice: Share Your Story**  
<http://www.your-voice.org/>
- **AboutFace: Learn about PTSD from Veterans Who Live with it Every Day. Hear Their Stories. Find out How Treatment Turned Their Lives Around.**  
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace/>

## Articles

- **“With Help Comes Hope”**  
<http://lifelineforattemptsurvivors.org/turning-points-survivors-tell-how-they-made-it-through-their-darkest-hour/>
- **“Personal Stories by People with a Mental Illness, Their Families and Friends”**  
[http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/mental\\_illness\\_and\\_health/stories.aspx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/mental_illness_and_health/stories.aspx)

## Book

- **Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community** By Joe Lambert  
<http://www.amazon.com/Digital-Storytelling-Capturing-Creating-Community/dp/0415627036>

# Resources: Organizations and Initiatives

Here are some helpful tools, links, and resources

- **Stories for Change:** [www.storiesforchange.net](http://www.storiesforchange.net)  
Online meeting place for community digital storytelling supporters
- **Narrative Matters:**  
[www.healthaffairs.org/narrative-matters](http://www.healthaffairs.org/narrative-matters)  
Features personal stories about experiences with the health care system and the people in it, using the power of stories to highlight an important public policy issue.
- **Honest, Open, Proud Program:**  
[www.comingoutproudprogram.org](http://www.comingoutproudprogram.org)  
This program aims to reduce “self-stigma” associated with mental illness.
- **Talk, Text, Act:**  
<http://creatingcommunitysolutions.org/texttalkact>  
Join a nationwide conversation on mental health and learn how to help a friend in need through text messaging.
- **SAMHSA Recovery Month:**  
[www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov)  
Every September, SAMHSA sponsors Recovery Month to increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance use issues and celebrate the people who recover.
- **Faces & Voices of Recovery:**  
[www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org)  
Whether you’re a person in recovery or a family member, share your story to demonstrate that recovery works for over 23 million Americans and offer hope to people who are still struggling, their families, and communities.
- **StoryCenter:** [www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org)  
StoryCenter creates spaces for transforming lives and communities through the acts of listening to and sharing stories. Since 1993, they have partnered with organizations around the world on projects in Storywork, digital storytelling, and other forms of digital media production. They offer public workshops to support individuals in creating and sharing stories