

What it takes to tell a powerful story about Inclusive Living

Paul Alford

Inclusion Ireland, member of the Inclusive Living Network, Community Activist

I have been telling the story of my life experience for the last 17 years.

I tell my story to people of lots of different backgrounds from self-advocates and families to professionals and politicians. I have also spoke to the media on many occasions. I go to speak at

lots of different organisations with my job at Inclusion Ireland

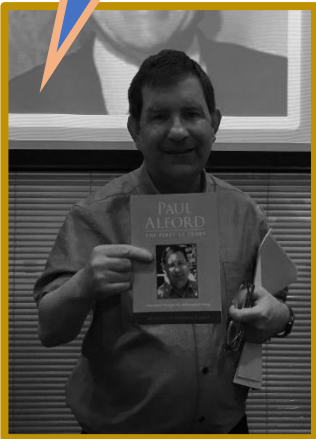


When I first started telling my story I was nervous and got upset.

Now I have got over that and am happy that I am happy to be helping others to live a life of their own.

I get good responses and more people ask me to come and talk at their organisations around the country after they hear me speak.

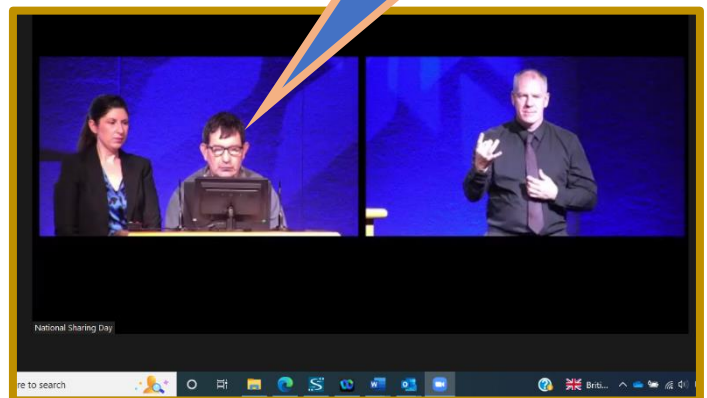
I have written a book about my life story to show other people what you can do in life when you speak up for yourself.



Here are some things I think are important for story telling:

- You have to think about your experiences and what you want to talk about.
- You have to put in the time to prepare your story.
- To tell a story you have to find your voice and use it.
- Telling your story through a video can help people to understand it better.
- Speak clearly and slowly so people know what you are talking about.

You have to find the courage in yourself to speak



Speaking from the heart means you connect with people in a real way

- You can use pictures to help tell your story.
- Putting your story in Easy-to-Read format will make it easier for other people to read it.
- Explaining about how living in the community works gives a chance for people to believe in inclusive living.



- Talk about what supports help you to live on your own and how important it is to make your own decisions.

What the people at the Athlone Gathering added to what Paul had to say about telling your story

Stories are more powerful than facts!

Be clear about what you are trying to leave behind with the people who are listening

Provide listeners with a picture of what a positive outcome or solution looks like

Even when you have a focus on the positive leave room to acknowledge challenges

If you are telling someone else's story you need their permission!

Check not just that the details in your story are factual

Imagine the people in the story are all in the room and check how comfortable you are with the details you include

When you look back at something that was hard but now you can laugh it now tell people; sometimes people need to look back at the hard times with laughter.

Keep it as short and simple as possible and do a 'jargon test' on yourself

Keep the balance respect, impact and integrity

Mind where the story goes after you give it. If the story needs it ask for trust or confidentiality or respect for the people in the story

Check with your friends that the details you include are truthful, sensitive, helpful and necessary

For the first time you tell your story, choose your circle of listeners carefully.

You can use pictures and video for the people you are telling the story to

Keep the script to yourself; use words in a presentation or on screen sparingly

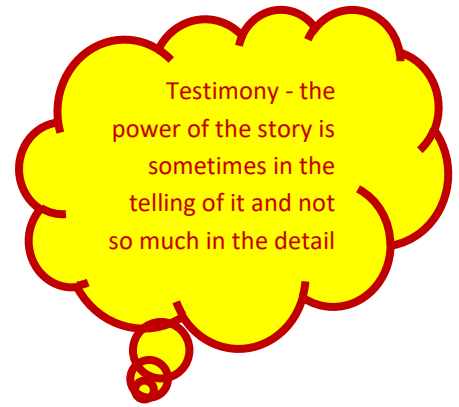
If you are going to use written words, make them accessible and easy to read

If you are using spoken words, be mindful that some people may not understand some of the words you are using

Mind yourself when telling the story, when you are preparing, just before you tell it and when talking to others about it.

Be kind to yourself and understand how telling your story sometimes brings stuff up that you don't expect

Hang your story on a helpful general principle and tell your listener what that is at the beginning and at the end



Practice, practice, practice what you are saying with your trusted friend or network

Stay on relationships; thank those who are hosting the story and those helping you to tell it

