

Go for the Gut... Powerful Personal Testimony

Use Your "Real Voice"

Think about how you would tell your story to your best friend. Your everyday language will sound authentic and sincere.

Paint a Picture

Use words that create an image. Include telling details.* It's the difference between:

"I work with families struggling with poverty."

OR

"I work with moms who, in the morning, don't know whether they will be able to serve their kids dinner that night"

"Hit their Emotions"

"Make people cry" — "Go for the gut"

Your story will leave a lasting impression if you connect with your audience at an emotional level.

Say "I" not We *

Telling your own story is more powerful than telling someone else's.

If you are representing a group... tell one person's story but end with, "This is representative of what it is like to quit tobacco. The other youth standing in front of you could all tell similar stories."

Share Your Passion

A true story told by someone who is passionate and enthusiastic is compelling personal testimony.



"I used the Quit Line. I don't have to worry that my kids will start smoking because of me. 70% of smokers want to quit. Take it from me, they will need help. Raising the tobacco tax will make it easier for people like me to get the help they need to quit."

Quotable Quotes

If you want them to remember your story, give them something to quote. Think short, powerful sound bites.

"I'm a smoker. I support the tax because I don't want my kids to smoke."

"I'm 15...my breakfast used to be a cigarette...TATU changed that."

"I didn't love my cigarettes more than my unborn child...but I was so addicted."

End Happy & Show a Solution

Legislators want to solve problems and make things better.

"When we had a coalition, we saw a significant drop in youth smoking rates. I saw with my own eyes that funding a comprehensive tobacco control program prevented kids from smoking. With an increase in funding, our kids would have access to the same services as our neighboring counties."

"I haven't been able to reach out to the kids who most need help. With additional funding our youth group could reach the whole county."

"I don't smoke...and I don't want my friends to either. Raising the tax will keep nearly 90,000 children from starting to smoke."

3 Tips for Written Testimony

Include a photograph of the person in the story. It may be more powerful to show them in their environment, for instance standing in front of their home or at their neighborhood school.

Use text below a photo for your key message. This is the text that is most likely to be read.

Include quotes, use the actual language of the person telling the story.

Tobacco Control Resource Center for Wisconsin, March 2007.

These tips were collected from Wisconsin tobacco control advocates during the webcast on storytelling in January 2007 & from **Telling Stories as Best Practice* by Andy Goodman.