Being an Advocate & Making an Impact

WHAT IS ADVOCACY

“the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal”

1. Personal – Individual Focus: Ensuring that individuals & caregivers are getting the best services and supports that they are entitled to

2. Political – Systems Focus: Creating changes to improve services and supports for people with brain injury and/or other disabilities
EFFECTIVE POLITICAL ADVOCACY

1. Direct Lobbying – Face to face contact between paid staff and policy makers

2. Grassroots Lobbying – Working with others to have them contact their own policy makers
   - Personal Stories are our most effective grassroots lobbying strategy – this is you!
   - Contact your local as well as your state legislatures

STORY BOARDS

1. Helps you frame your story around a specific problem and solution

2. Creates an effective message that leads to positive change

3. Helps you stay focused and brief

4. Your story can be used in many different ways
   - In-person meetings, email, phone, youtube video, social media, blogs, media, etc
1. **INTRODUCTION**

- Your 60 Second Personal Commercial
  
  - **Who, What, When, Where, Why, How**
    - Provide name and where you live (you are a constituent)
    - Describe your brain injury, what happened
    - How have things changed or are changing
    - **Give specific examples!**
      - I.e., rather than saying “I have cognitive processing problems” give an example: “Since my TBI I have trouble using anything with touch-buttons such as my microwave and ATMs.”
  
  - Establishes your credibility — you’re the expert on your own life!!

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

- Open the dialog between you and your family, friends, doctor, etc

- Establishes your credibility — you’re the expert on your own life!!

- This is a tool you can tweak and adapt, think of your audience that you’re speaking to.
2. PROBLEM

- Pick one problem you are facing
  - where do you want to raise awareness?
  - What’s your goal?

- Describe a real life example of the problem and how it impacts your life

- Avoid the blame game & simply “admiring the problem”

- Examples: medicaid, invisibility, dismissive docs, friends and family who won’t listen

3. SOLUTION

- What do you want them to do about the issue?
  - Describe the change you want and how it will improve your situation. Be specific.
  - Or, ask them to work with you to find a solution

- Ask them for a commitment
  - Are they going to do what you asked them to do? If not, what else could you ask them to do

  - examples: you want them to listen to you, have patience with you, acknowledge that your problems are real, docs - give you referrals if they can’t help you
GIVE THANKS

- Always thank people for their time and for listening to you.
- Thank them for their commitment, if they made one.

FOLLOW-UP

- Send a thank you note after a meeting
- Build a ongoing relationship, sharing your story is the first step
- Contact again to see if they did what you asked
- Update your story, as needed
BE BRIEF

- 3-4 Minutes max - you’re objective is to open the dialog
  *** if you talk too long you will lose them, and you only have
  this one chance to connect with them.
- You need to pick a focus for your talk
- You Must Prepare & practice…practice…practice
- Use the Story Board to prepare

  Be Polite and Be Real

WHAT’S NEXT

- Finish your story

- Share your story with your elected officials
  - Send/Email your story to your legislators
  - Set up a 1:1 in-district meeting at a local business or venue
  - Set up 1:1 meeting with them at the State Capitol during the
    legislative session
WHAT’S NEXT

- Other places to consider sharing your story:
  - Local newspaper and radio
  - Your personal blog and/or YouTube channel
  - Contribute to other blogs:
    - The Mighty
    - BrainLine
    - Medium
    - TBI Hope & Inspiration Magazine
    - Book anthologies

Resources

- Brain Injury Association of America
- Your local Association or Alliance
- senate.gov
- house.gov