

Speaking From Your Heart: Public Speaking and the Path to Recovery

**National Coalition of Mental Health
Consumer/Survivor Organizations**

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Step A: Getting A Speaking Group Started

- **Find 2 to 3 other peers:**
 - Who you feel comfortable with.
 - Who share your passion and your values.
 - Who you can trust.
 - Who may have experience and confidence in public speaking and connecting with others.

Step B: Preparing Your Talk

- **Get clear about what you want to say.**
 - Find your passion.
 - Start with your personal recovery and generalize to larger issues.
- **Show how the principles of recovery (SAMHSA) played a role in your personal recovery.**
 - Does it inspire hope?
 - Does it show self-determination?
 - Did people believe in you?
- **Rehearse with each other.**
 - Creating a safe nonjudgmental atmosphere.

Step C: Preparing Yourself

- **Keep focused on your goal.**
 - **Why do you want to tell your story?**
 - **Do you want to give hope?**
 - **You may want people to realize we are just as fully human as every individual?**
 - **Keep coming back to your greater purpose.**
 - **If you didn't present, stigma and discrimination would remain.**
 - **You may want people to realize we are people too.**

Step C: Preparing Yourself cont.

- **Get centered:**
 - **Stay Calm and Grounded.**
 - Meditate, breathe, sing a favorite song, go for a walk, distract yourself by reading a book, visit with a friend.
 - **Talk yourself through it.**
 - I believe in myself and forgive myself.
 - I am not perfect and that is OK because no one is perfect.

Step D: Getting Ready for Your Presentation

- **Know your audience:**
 - Find out who they are.
 - What do they want to learn about?
 - Think about the best way to reach them.
- **A few helpful hints:**
 - When presenting to professionals:
 - Dress more formally.
 - They may need more handouts, references, and slides.

Step D: Getting Ready cont.

- **More helpful hints:**
 - **When presenting to families:**
 - They need to be understood as doing the best they can, don't blame them.
 - **When presenting to consumers:**
 - You can be more informal.
 - This group may enter into dialogue more easily, go with it.
 - **Learn about local culture, local issues, and local services.**

Step D: Getting Ready cont.

- **Helpful hints for preparing the location:**
 - **Decide on the arrangement of chairs, podium, and lighting:**
 - **Based on your preferences decide if you want more open space between you and your audience.**
 - **Determine if you prefer a certain arrangement of chairs, such as a semicircle.**
 - **Decide on what lighting you prefer.**
 - **Do you have enough light to see peoples' expressions and for them to see each other?**

Step E: Connect With Your Heart

- **Connect ahead of time with some of your audience:**
 - **Get comfortable with them:**
 - Have dinner with them, find out their hopes and dreams, they will be your guides.
 - They will be your connection to the local place and people.
- **Pick someone out you know or who appears friendly and engaged.**
 - Look at them until you are comfortable with the whole group.

Connecting with the Heart vs. the Head

| Speaking From the Heart and Mind Together | Speaking From the Head |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I lost hope.• My spirit was crushed.• I connected with others.• I found hope, meaning, a spiritual connection, and love. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staying stuck in illness story.• I have this diagnosis.• This happened to me.• I am a victim. |

Step F: Be Your True Self While Speaking

- **Try to be as natural and spontaneous as possible.**
- **Minimize the use of props such as notes or PowerPoint.**
 - **Reading your presentation separates you from the audience; even if you need to write it out.**
 - **Move towards writing down 3 to 4 main points.**
- **Spend no more than 25 % on the horror story of your life and the last 75% on the positive, hopeful recovery.**

Step F: Be Your True Self cont.

- **Share feelings you are having:**
 - If you are recalling a sad or fearful time, share some of that feeling.
 - Anger is a special case:
 - Our society and especially our mental health system has difficulty in hearing too much anger.
 - Transform the anger to passion by talking with peers and getting support before your talk.
 - Take off enough of the edge to be heard and watch your audience's reaction.

Step G: Engage Audience in Dialogue

- **Create an atmosphere of acceptance to engage in dialogue for at least 15 minutes:**
 - Through respecting and listening to each question with your heart as well as your head.
 - Showing a sincere interest in each person's contribution, realizing that each of us have value.
 - Seeking shared meaning even when none is readily apparent.
 - Be nonjudgmental, working hard to listen to different points of view.
 - Value our equality, we are all equally human.
 - Seek feedback on how you did: verbally and in writing.

Helpful Resources

- National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations: <http://www.ncmhcsso.org>
- SAMHSA Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity, and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health: <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov>
- National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery:
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma05-4129/>
- Self-Disclosure and Its Impact on Individuals Who Receive Mental Health Services:
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SMA08-4337/>

Presenter Contact Information

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