

SHARING YOUR STORY FOR THE GREATEST IMPACT

Example: Simon's Story Map

1. Introduce Yourself

Tip: Share your full name, city or town. This helps your audience connect with you.

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us for this talk on women's heart health, Because Her Heart Matters Too. Let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Simon and I come from Calgary. I became involved in this advocacy campaign because my wife Cheryl had heart disease. Let me tell you how my wife's heart health journey began.

My wife, Cheryl, and I had a great life. We enjoyed our jobs, loved to entertain and traveled a lot. We were both really healthy; very active, we ate well, and managed our stress. (Simon's Story Map 'then')

2. What Happened?

Tip: What happened before you received the help you needed? Keep this very brief – think about what you could share in 30 seconds.

Cheryl and I were doing our usual Sunday hike. She was short of breath and dizzy. We decided to take a break, have some water and slow our pace. A few minutes later she started to complain of a fluttery feeling in her chest. We ended our hike early and went home. Cheryl went upstairs to rest. I went to check on her a few hours later but she would not wake up. I called 911. At the hospital they told me she died from spontaneous coronary artery dissection, also called SCAD, which I was told can slow or block blood flow to the heart, causing a heart attack or sudden death. (Simon's Story Map 'what happened')

3. What Helped?

Tip: Describe what helped in your recovery, especially if culturally relevant.

My life as I knew it changed that day. Cheryl was my everything. I was angry and confused and couldn't understand why my healthy wife died so suddenly. I leaned on my network for a lot of support and I am slowly healing with time. But I still needed answers about how a young, healthy woman could suddenly die from heart disease. I committed to become more knowledgeable about heart disease and how it affects women. Through this, I realized that more needs to be done to support women's heart health. (Simon's Story Map 'now')

4. How are you Different Today?

Tip: Share what is going right in your life or how you are experiencing recovery.

I now understand more about heart disease and how my wife's story can be used to help others. Through this advocacy work it is helping the transition from mourning to motivation. Cheryl would have wanted to use her story in a positive way.

5. Make your Point

Tip: This is a transition from your personal story to a message for your audience.

I don't want what happened to Cheryl to happen to anyone else. I have come to understand that women can often dismiss their symptoms and attribute it to non-cardiac issues. They also can delay seeking treatment because of fear, embarrassment or they do not want to bother anyone. I wish I had taken her to the hospital that day to have her symptoms looked into.

6. Make your "ask"

Tip: Let your audience know how they can help. Say thank you.

Do not assume that a young and healthy woman cannot have heart disease. Get informed and when in doubt, check it out! It's better to have a false alarm. Thank you for listening to my story.