

# Guidelines for sharing lived experience

If you choose to tell your story on the Jami Mental Health Awareness Shabbat, here are a few suggestions to help you stay in control of what you share.

## Spend time on this

Think about which parts of your story you wish to share and write a first draft. Put that away for a couple of weeks and then revisit it. Have you opened up about experiences that actually feel too raw to share with others? Can you make some edits and tweaks?

## Keep it simple

A human story simply told has the power to grip an audience and capture both hearts and minds.

## Expert by experience

You are an 'expert' on your lived experience. Don't forget that.

## Set boundaries for questions

Decide what you are prepared to answer questions on and what you will not discuss.

People are naturally curious and their questions may feel too intrusive. So, decide if you are prepared to take questions after your talk. There may be areas that you do not wish to answer questions on. Some speakers, for example, who talk about their experience of eating disorders make it clear they are not prepared to answer questions about their weight or what they eat.

## Be proud

Sharing your story is a courageous act. By sharing your account you will inspire those who listen, who also identify with lived experience of mental illness, and educate and inform others.

## Reflect

Give your talk to a friend or relative and reflect on how telling your story makes you feel. Then imagine telling the same story to a room full of people. It will feel different, so if anything felt too triggering or made you feel vulnerable in front of one person, think about how you might feel in front of others.

## Make final edits and practise

We suggest that you write and rehearse your story several times before it gets a public outing.

## Personal stories

There are many online resources where people share their personal stories via video or on a blog which our communities can access. For example, Time to Change Wales and Mind both provide real life personal stories which can be found here:

[timetochangewales.org.uk/en/personal-stories/](http://timetochangewales.org.uk/en/personal-stories/)

[mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories)

## Look after yourself

Whenever we're taking on something big, it's important that we make time to look after ourselves. Think about who you may want to spend time with or chat to after you've given the talk. Perhaps there's an activity or hobby that you really enjoy and would like to do. It's great to plan ahead with this to ensure you have the time to unwind.