

How to Share your Experience as a Caregiver Advisor

The role of a Caregiver Advisor is to bring the lens of a person with lived experience to the team in a manner that will help shape quality care and create positive change. It is important to keep in mind that **advising is different than storytelling***; storytelling is focused on retelling a personal journey while advising is asking for your perspective, as a caregiver, on an item or issue of interest.

Storytelling*

There are venues and occasions when Caregivers are invited to share honest and real stories about their personal experience and those of their loved ones as it relates to mental health care. When asked to tell your story, the purpose should be clearly laid out in the invitation to speak and will often take the form of a rehearsed presentation. For more information about these opportunities, please see:

https://www.ipfcc.org/resources/Sharing_Your_Story.pdf

When advising, there some tips when sharing your perspective as a Caregiver Advisor:

- Provide a new perspective or way of looking at a situation in a respectful manner.
- Be prepared to consider the different viewpoints of others.
- Stay on topic to increase the impact of your contributions.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or speak up.
- While your voice is welcomed, refrain from monopolizing the conversation. It is important that all voices are heard within the time allocated. Be aware of other's body language and keep your comments short and relevant.
- Sharing difficult experiences as an illustration can be impactful when giving your perspective; however, it is important to not include personal grievances. Focus only on the teaching moments for the topic being discussed.
- As a representative of the caregiver voice, it may be relevant to include the experiences of others as it relates to a specific topic. In doing so, ensure that the confidentiality of others is maintained by refraining from using names or identifiable details. Remember to keep the details of your loved one's health information private and respect their confidentiality, unless otherwise permitted.
- Always be aware that personal experiences can be emotionally laden, and a certain topic might unexpectedly trigger a heightened emotional response. During these moments, take a minute to consider how to best express yourself before sharing.
- At times, it may be useful to include recommendations based upon what was helpful or could have been improved from your experiences.
- Feel free to offer resources or practices from other organizations or research to inform the discussion.
- Feel confident in highlighting the accepted principles of patient and family-centred care in health care settings as it applies to the work at hand.

