

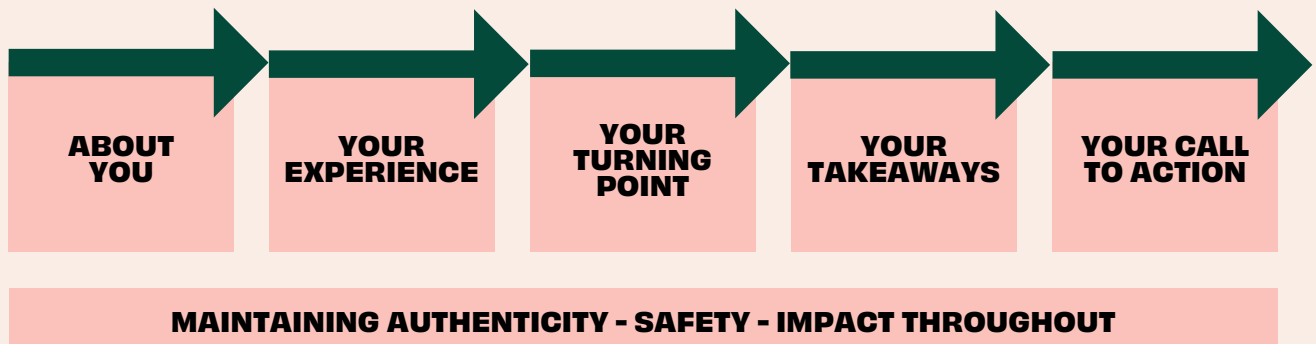
# HOW TO **STRUCTURE** YOUR STORY

**Giving structure to your story by utilising techniques for engagement is the best way to maximise effectiveness and ensure your message cuts through with relatedness.**

Using a chronological timeline is best practice in developing and telling your story to ensure it makes the most sense to the receiver.

Use a journal, a whiteboard, a spreadsheet or post it notes and start collecting your memories. You don't have to use everything in your story, but writing it all down can help start the process. Start with everything in your journey, and cut down once it's all in front of you.

**Here are some headings that might be useful.**



## STRUCTURE: ABOUT YOU

Help people feel like they know you, by mentioning places, activities, hobbies and structures they can relate to. The audience will invest in your story more deeply if they can picture themselves there too.

**Where did you grow up?**

**What do you do for work?**

**What were your first memories?**

**Did you study, travel, or play any sports?**

**What's your family like?**

**What brings you joy?**

**What groups did you belong to?**

**What were you into as a kid/ teenager?**

## STRUCTURE: YOUR EXPERIENCES

This is the most potent ingredient in your story. Remember that what you share can hold the power to reduce any shame in others.

**When did your challenges begin?**

**How were people in your life affected?**

**How did it show up in your body?**

**Have you received a diagnosis?**

**Did you struggle to overcome, and get pushed back/give up along the way?**

**What changes did you notice to your thoughts, feelings, behaviours?**

**Were your struggles private or did you share what you were going through?**

**Experiencers: do you remember your first moments of thinking "I'm not OK?"**

**Supporters: how did you discover that someone needed your help?**

## STRUCTURE: YOUR TURNING POINT

Most stories have a climax; a moment where everything started to change. Even if it wasn't a dramatic event, it may have been a series of smaller moments that indicated a shift.

**Was there a rock bottom? Did you reach for support, or did support find you?**

**Was there a sudden epiphany, or a gradual adjustment in your thoughts?**

**Has there been struggle, shame, acceptance, doubt or something else?**

**What beliefs were challenged and what people were there to support you?**

## STRUCTURE: YOUR TAKEAWAYS

This is your opportunity to inspire the audience to see what's possible. Show them what you've learned and what you're most proud of about the way you show up in the world now.

**How are you now? What supports worked well, and how do you keep it up?**

**What have you left behind and what are your new thoughts or belief systems?**

**How has the relationship with yourself and others changed or evolved?**

## STRUCTURE: YOUR CALL TO ACTION

Let your call to action meet your purpose. Think about why you felt compelled to share your story with a wider audience and invite them to take an action that meets that purpose. Answer the question "So, what next?" by leaving your audience with one small step they can take today.

**What would you want someone having a similar experience to know?**

**What do you think we as a society need to focus on to move forward?**

**What did you wish you had known or done or been told or believed?**

**What can those struggling do to make a meaningful change in their own lives?**

Look at the ocean of answers you've created from those prompting questions and weave all of these ideas and memories together in a narrative that makes sense and meets your purpose for sharing. Let the audience know who you are, what happened, what you learned along the way and what's next, for you and potentially...for them.



### ACTIVITY

- 1. Start with everything - the full, and private version, just for your eyes.**
- 2. Refine it for your chosen audience.**