

YOU ARE AN ANXIETY AMBASSADOR LET'S HEAR YOUR STORY!

WHY SHARING YOUR STORY IS SO IMPORTANT

Your story can help someone in a similar situation to take the steps that can make a difference.

Many people around us experience anxiety at some point. Some people may believe that they'll never feel better. Hearing personal life experiences from people who have lived with debilitating anxiety and have sought support can provide others with valuable tools, insights and skills. Sharing our stories and experiences can inspire and encourage others to find the life-changing support they are looking for.

We all come from diverse backgrounds and our journeys have all been different. Perhaps you have had a particular experience that resonates with a teenager, parent, senior, farmer, indigenous person, member of the LGBTI community or someone from a linguistically or culturally diverse background.

Showcasing our differences can play an important role in challenging the myth that anxiety and mental health issues are rare, or that they only impact particular types of people.

Each story shared has the capacity to spark a conversation between friends, families or colleagues. Personal stories make deep connections. Collectively, our stories can change how our society talks about mental health.

Mental illness is much more than hopelessness and chronic illness - we know that. Our journeys are also filled with triumphs of courage, determination, growth, resilience and hope - let's get together and share these important stories!

SHARING YOUR STORY

Before you submit your story take some time to reflect on what you want to share.

Take a minute to consider:

- What part of your lived experience do you think might benefit others?
- What are you trying to achieve in sharing your story, both for the reader and for yourself?
- What feelings do you wish impart to your readers?
- What are you comfortable in sharing others? Are there aspects of your story that you would like to keep private?

Getting clear on your intentions not only provides you with a helpful framework for drafting your story, but it also ensures that you communicate from a place of authenticity and integrity. It may even be helpful to have a chat with a close friend or relative, or with the project coordinator - a sort of 'brainstorm' about your experiences, to help you narrow down and focus your ideas.

Peer support makes a difference and your story of recovery can light the way for others. It is often helpful to share something about your dark times, and then share about how things got better for you.

Keep your story personal and focused on events in your own life. While you may also have witnessed friends or family members struggle with chronic anxiety, we are interested in hearing your particular story.

GETTING STARTED...

STARTING POINTS

Choose what period in your journey you would like to focus on. Focusing on a defined period such as an incident or event, is often helpful.

For example...

When was the first time you reached out for help - what happened?
How did this experience change you?

Snapshots such as these can help others to understand your point of view and how things felt for you then, as well as now.

Sometimes it can feel hard to know where to start. Having a question in mind may help you get your story flowing.

Here are a few more ideas....

- *How were things then, compared to now?*
- *Have you taken any steps to challenge yourself and/or have accomplished something you never thought you could do?*
- *What have you learned about yourself on your journey of recovery?*
How has reaching out changed your life?
What is the best thing that has happened to you since you sought support?
- *Have you talked with colleagues, family or friends about your anxiety and recovery?*
How did these conversations go?
Did they surprise you?
- *Have your experiences made you a mental health advocate?*
Tell us about how you found your voice.
Are there any ways, even small ways, that you are acting to create change , or are supporting others within the community?
- *Why is it important for you to talk about anxiety and mental health?*
Do you think speaking out about your anxiety can make a difference to how people view anxiety and mental health? How?

Or, perhaps you know of strategies, tools or techniques that have made a real difference to you in your recovery....

- *Does exercise help your stress and anxiety?*
What activities do you enjoy doing?
In what ways do you think exercise has helped you manage your anxiety?

GETTING STARTED...

STARTING POINTS

- *Have you used techniques that help calm you when you have experienced heightened anxiety?*
How did you learn these techniques?
What are some techniques that help you get through these moments?
- *Do you have a 'go to' place when you are feeling anxious? Real or imagined, describe this place.*
Explain how this place makes you feel.
How does this help you manage your anxiety?

Don't feel quite ready to tell your story? OK, then.....

Share your favourite positive thinking quote or saying. Sharing these messages of hope and recovery can make a big difference to someone else's day!

HELPFUL TIPS ON PREPARING VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS

Audio recordings

- *If you use a script make sure it is easy to read. It can be helpful to read through it several times to iron out any stumbling points.*
- *Relax and don't rush your words - speak naturally at conversational speed.*
- *Find a quiet and private environment free from ambient noise and interruptions.*
- *Leave 5 second on either side of your recording.*

Video recordings

- *Whether recording with your computer, smartphone or with a video camera, carefully consider where you position yourself in relation to the camera.*
- *Keep the camera connected with your eye line - if the camera is positioned too high or low this may distract to the viewer and detract from your story.*
- *Take a moment to think about the lighting and the background of your video - videos that are too dark, light or have poor contrast may distract the viewer from fully focusing on the important message you are communicating.*
- *Experiment with different backgrounds until you find a shot that you think works.*

Video and audio tools

Most modern computers and laptops have built-in cameras and programs to capture audio or video recordings. Smartphones and tablets also come with built in cameras which are simple to use and videos and audio recordings can be easily sent via email.

*If your computer does not have a program already installed you may need to download a program. **Quicktime** is a free and easy to use program that can be quickly installed on Macintosh and Windows platforms. This can be downloaded on the Apple website www.apple.com/au/quicktime/download/*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I would like to share my story but I'd like to stay anonymous. Is my privacy ensured?

Yes, you can definitely participate and remain anonymous and if it is helpful, you are welcome to use an alias or pseudonym. Unless you decide to include specific personal information, you can feel safe in knowing that your privacy is protected. All email addresses and any other contact details shared with ARCVic will remain private and confidential.

Can I make amendments or remove my story once it has been submitted?

Yes. If you would like to amend your story or remove it at any point from the ARCVic website please contact the project coordinator via email rtsatsis@arcvic.org.au. It is important to note that certain stories may be shared on social media platforms e.g. Facebook, for mental health advocacy purposes.

Once information is posted on these third party platforms ARCVic are unable to prevent users from sharing stories and reposting your stories.

I'd like to share my story but I am not sure how to create video or audio recording and upload these. Can I get support to do this?

Yes, if you require support in creating or uploading your story we are happy to provide extra assistance. Please see our tips below on making a video or audio recording. If you require further assistance please contact rtsatsis@arcvic.org.au

Will my story be viewable to the public?

Yes, all stories will be displayed on the ARCVic website and may be shared on other social media platforms such as Facebook.

I would like to tell my story but I don't know where to start...

Please take a look our list of starting points – these may provide a useful prompt that can help to focus your story. It may even be helpful to have a chat with a close friend or relative, or with the project coordinator — a sort of brainstorm about your experiences, to help you narrow down and focus your ideas.

Please keep in mind : sharing personal experiences can evoke both positive and negative emotions. It is important to keep your wellbeing in mind when documenting and sharing your story.

If you are experiencing anxiety or care for someone who is, and you need to talk, please contact the ARCVic HelpLine 1300 269 438 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

How can I send ARCVic my story?

Please email your video, audio and text files to rtsatsis@arcvic.org.au and include a brief description. If you would like to send your written story via post please address this to **ARCVIC Anxiety Ambassador Project, PO Box 367 Canterbury Vic 3126.**

ANXIETY AMBASSADOR STORY SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

We ask that all written submissions be limited to roughly 500-800 words.

VIDEO & AUDIO SUBMISSION

If you would like to share your story through video or audio recording we ask that you keep these between 3 – 5 minutes in length.

PHOTOS & ARTWORK

Photos, photos series, photo collages and original artwork are a great way of telling a story visually. Please provide a high quality image and include a short description.

If you require assistance in submitting your text, audio or video recordings or images please email: anxietyambassador@arcvic.org.au.

WHAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PUBLISH

There are some topics we won't publish:

- Content that endorses or promotes a particular product, drug, health professional, treatment centre, personal websites, blogs, books and other personal projects.
- Content that contains potentially triggering content e.g. descriptions of self harm, suicidal behaviour, graphic description of violence or abuse.
- Content that discloses personal identifying information such as phone numbers, emails, or addresses of the participant or others.
- Stories which seek to discredit service providers, institutions or health professionals.
- Opinion pieces or academic articles.
- Content which contains offensive language, violent imagery and explicit material.

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For further information on becoming an Anxiety Ambassador please email rtsatsis@arcvic.org.au