



# Living Well Storytelling Tool

Storytelling is a powerful way to illustrate the effectiveness of your program, show the potential for greater impact, and make a point about the need for sustainable funding. It also adds human appeal to your case and lets you get away from statistics and numbers.

Gather at least two stories from your local program to use in presentations, materials and other outreach. These might be profiles of people who have benefited from Living Well workshops, a leader who has seen changes in participants, a doctor who sees the benefits in his/her patients, an employer who refers employees, etc.

Good stories share several key elements. These are outlined below, along with questions to brainstorm as you build your story.

Elements of effective storytelling	Questions to get you there
<b>Opening</b> —Start with a compelling opening that grabs your audience’s attention. Often unveiling a startling fact, sharing a great anecdote or saying the unexpected can do the trick.	<p>Is there anything especially <i>touching, encouraging, unusual, compelling</i> or <i>ironic</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>benefit</b> can you illustrate?</li> <li>• What was the unexpected <b>outcome</b>?</li> <li>• What was the life-changing <b>impact</b>?</li> <li>• NOTE: Sometimes it’s easiest to lay out your story first, then think about the opening.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b> —Provide just enough background information so that the reader can understand your story.	<p>What are the <i>background elements</i> of your story that your audience needs to know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who</b> is the person/people involved?</li> <li>• <b>When, why</b> and <b>how</b> did this person become involved in Living Well?</li> </ul>
<b>The Barriers</b> —Good stories have a problem to overcome or an issue to be addressed.	<p>What were the <i>main barriers</i> the person had to overcome?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>caused</b> the person to seek out Living Well?</li> <li>• What <b>challenges</b> stood in the way?</li> <li>• What was <b>unexpected</b> or <b>surprising</b>?</li> </ul>



<p><b>The Opportunities</b>—Good stories also provide hope.</p>	<p>What were the <i>opportunities, successes or ah-ha moments</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's good? What's working?</li> <li>• What <b>improvements</b> in health have materialized?</li> <li>• Who <b>benefits</b>?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What Now?</b>—So what do we do with this new knowledge?</p>	<p>What <i>conclusions</i> can you draw? What <i>call-to-action</i> does this create?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is <b>happening</b> now that wasn't happening before (better health, more movement, savings in health care costs, back to work, etc.)?</li> <li>• Who else can <b>benefit</b>?</li> <li>• What <b>advice</b> would the subject of the story give?</li> <li>• What can we do to <b>make this opportunity available</b> to everyone?</li> </ul>

**Other Tips:**

- A good story can convey an important message and also be compelling—it doesn't have to be dry! Find ways to interject real people, anecdotes and quotes into your story.
- Use descriptive language so that your audience can put themselves in the story and try to understand it first hand.

**Financial Sustainability**



**Putting It Into Practice**

Use this grid to develop your success story. An example is provided, along with a sample story.

<b>Questions</b>
<p><b>What are the background elements of my story that my audience needs to know?</b>  <i>Maria, in her late 50s, had poorly controlled diabetes. She had foot pain that bothered her, so she got little exercise, ate an average of 10 tortillas with each main meal, and struggled with her weight.</i></p>
<p><b>What barriers existed?</b>  <i>She has two flights of stairs in her home, and it was getting more and more difficult to get to her bedroom. She also took a fall while walking her dog, and became afraid to leave the house or even to go to the grocery store less than a mile away.</i></p>
<p><b>What's the good news? What opportunities, successes and ah-ha moments exist?</b>  <i>After Maria and a friend participated last fall in a Tomando Control workshop in Pleasantville, Oregon, through Pleasantville Senior Center, she got her physician's help in finding special shoes that have reduced her foot pain. She has started exercising regularly by walking her dog around the neighborhood, cut back to five tortillas a day (so has her husband!), and is losing weight. Her blood glucose readings are now mostly in the normal range.</i></p>
<p><b>What now? Who else can benefit? How do we extend this opportunity?</b>  <i>Maria's best friend has asthma and attended the same workshop, and they now often cook and exercise together. Maria's church is interested in co-hosting Tomando Control classes with the senior center. The church is a major social hub for the local Latino community, and is a promising partner for extending the program to many un- and underinsured people, many of whom are living with chronic health conditions and get much of their medical care in the hospital emergency department. Workshops are currently funded by a grant that ends soon. Finding a funding source to make workshops available in the future would make a major positive impact in the health of the community of Pleasantville.</i></p>
<p><b>Is there anything touching, encouraging, unusual, compelling or ironic about your story that might make a good introduction?</b>  <i>Maria enjoyed the workshops so much that she became a volunteer leader. She has now led three workshops. Because her diabetes is now well controlled, her physician cleared her to travel to her granddaughter's wedding in Mexico next month.</i></p>

**Sample Success Story****Furry and human friends help Pleasantville woman manage diabetes**

Maria Valdez had no idea how much of a dog lover she was until she got her diabetes in check thanks to the Tomando Control de Su Salud program.

Before enrolling in the program at the Pleasantville Senior Center last fall, Valdez, 55, had severe foot pain—a common complication of diabetes—and almost never exercised. She also struggled with her weight. When her dog, Rex, chased a squirrel while she was walking him in the park last fall, she fell. While she wasn't badly injured, the incident frightened her so much she didn't even want to go to the store for groceries.

But after Tomando Control de Su Salud taught her how to communicate effectively with her doctor, set safe, attainable exercise goals and eat more healthful foods, Valdez has noticed a lot of positive changes. She has new shoes designed to minimize diabetic foot pain that she wears for daily walk with Rex around her neighborhood. She even found companions for herself and her dog. She told a neighbor with asthma about Tomando Control, and they took the workshop together. Now they walk their dogs together every morning.

Valdez also gets her feet checked regularly, and all the exercise and better eating have helped lower her glucose levels and lose 20 pounds. She is also excited that her doctor has cleared her to attend her granddaughter's wedding in Mexico next month, with Rex taking part as ringbearer.

Another goal for Valdez is ensuring Tomando Control continues to be offered in her community, especially since she's become a volunteer leader. She believes a long-term commitment to Tomando Control by a partner organization in the community, rather than the short-term grants that support it now, will allow many others with chronic diseases to learn the benefits of self-management and share their own success stories.

For more information about Tomando Control, and opportunities for sponsors, contact the Pleasantville Senior Center at 541-111-1111.