

BEYOND SEPTEMBER GUIDE

How to Tell Your Story

Your story of surviving is powerful — for you, and for people still in the dark who need proof that people come back. Telling it well means telling it safely: for your own recovery, and for the people listening. National guidelines exist for exactly this, and they boil down to what follows.

First: you owe no one your story

Readiness comes before audience. If the thought of sharing makes you feel exposed or shaky, wait. Telling your story should cost you something manageable, not everything. Start small: one trusted person, a therapist, a support group — before any stage, post, or camera.

The safe-storytelling principles

- **Lead with hope and help.** The heart of the story is that you're here — what helped, what you hold onto, what you'd tell someone in the dark now.
- **Never describe method or detail.** Specifics about how an attempt happened can be dangerous to vulnerable listeners. That part is not the story. Skip it entirely.
- **Talk about the pain, not the act.** What led to the edge, what it felt like, and what brought you back — without the mechanics.
- **Name what helped.** A person, treatment, a crisis line, time, faith, a dog. Concrete hope is the gift you're giving.
- **Point somewhere.** Every telling should end with a door: 988, a resource, 'please reach out.'

Protect yourself while you share

- Decide in advance what's off-limits, and practice redirecting: 'That part stays mine.'
- After sharing publicly, plan decompression — a walk, a person to call, a quiet evening. Telling can stir things up days later.
- You can pause or stop at any time. 'I'm not ready for questions' is a complete sentence.
- If you're grieving a loss rather than telling your own survival story, the same rules apply — and your timeline is your own.

Where stories do good

- Support groups and peer programs — where telling is structured and held.
- Awareness events and campaigns — like Beyond September's — where one honest story changes a room.
- One-on-one, when someone confides in you. Sometimes the most important audience is one.

When you're ready to share it with a movement that shows up all year, we want to hear it. And if telling it brings the thoughts back, call or text 988 — that line is for you too.

Sources & further reading

- National recommendations for safe messaging about suicide: suicidepreventionmessaging.org
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — Attempt survivors: 988lifeline.org/help-yourself/attempt-survivors

Beyond September is an awareness and education initiative. This guide is general education — it is not medical, mental-health, or crisis care, and it is not a substitute for advice from a qualified professional. If you are struggling right now, call or text **988** or chat at 988lifeline.org. If you are in immediate danger, call **911**.