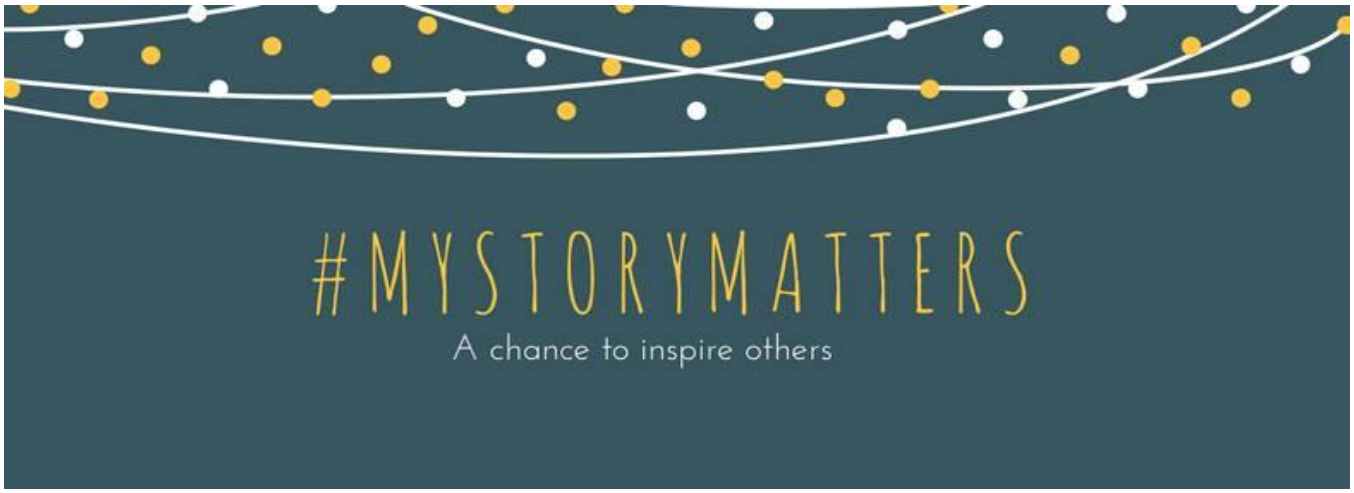

#MyStoryMatters is a campaign aimed at sharing people's positive experiences with recovery and inspiring others to tell their own.

Why do we share our stories? Storytelling can be an important part of recovery and allows individuals to tackle additional steps in overcoming their illness and get to a point where they can then help others.

Also, stories of recovery can help others see that change is possible; that people can get well and more importantly, stay well. Your story can instill hope. **Your story can save a life**.

Remember, only you can decide if you want to share your recovery story and what parts of it you want to share. Your level of disclosure, and whom you disclose to, is completely up to you.

Illness Story Versus Recovery Story

• Focuses on the impact of diagnosis • Features the disabling effect of the diagnosis • Supports thinking of life as limited • Lends to a pervasive hopelessness – the belief that this is the way life will always be	• Promotes change as being possible • Highlights an individual's strengths • Features overcoming barriers • Supports the sharing of what has worked for you in overcoming challenges and maintaining your wellness

Guidelines to your Recovery Story

Disclaimer: Your recovery story is personal and you are in no way required to disclose any information you do not wish to. This can be difficult for some people, so we will be here after the forum if you need to talk.

In writing or telling your recovery story, please use the following frame for guidance:

1. Introduction: Begin by telling us about who you are today (e.g., hobbies, family, work, school, etc.). Your introduction should tell listeners and readers who you are aside from mental illness. Your mental illness does not define you as a person.

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2. Crisis Stage: In this section you want to consider the following:

- Describe your life before your crisis stage
- Retrospectively, recount to us some early indicators or symptoms that made you aware of an oncoming life challenge
- What were you like during this time of crisis?
- What was your moment of crisis, and what events led you to this point?

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3. Acceptance Stage: In this section, consider the following:

- When did you realize it was time to begin recovery?
- Who and/or what helped you grasp acceptance of your life challenge?
- Where did you find the most support throughout this stage?

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4. Recovery Stage: Please consider the following questions when writing this portion:

- Was there a significant event or moment that allowed you to accept recovery?
- What were/are some of the coping strategies you have learned that helped you achieve and maintain recovery?
- What personal strengths have you developed as a result of your recovery?

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5. Closing: Reflect on the following:

- What is the best advice you can give to others currently recovering or going through a stage of life challenge?
- Do you do anything currently to help and provide support to others?
- What have you learned about yourself as a result of this process?

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We, here at the Mental Health Association of Central Florida, thank you so much for your participation and bravery in telling your story. Keep an eye out for the launch of "My Story Matters" on **November 1st, 2016**. Your story will raise awareness, inspire others, and lead as an outstanding example for others to positively seek support and education on mental illness.

We ask that you always remember ***your story matters***.

If you don’t finish your story today – that’s okay,
but we want to hear from you!
Please send your story to socialmedia@mhacf.org

Your story can be in video or written format.
You can submit annonymously if you’d prefer.