

A GUIDE TO TELLING YOUR SHINE STORY

GETTING STARTED

Thanks for being willing to share your story. The more survivors who share these empowering stories of hope, the less scary, stigmatized, and taboo this discussion will become in homes, schools, courtrooms, and family gatherings everywhere.

As part of our SHINE outreach in Pennsylvania, we want to build a network of Survivor Advocates who can help change the conversation about child sexual abuse. What is a Survivor Advocate? *An individual whose life has been forever changed by the child abuse they experienced, but who has gone on to heal from the trauma of abuse and now feels a calling to connect, share stories, educate communities, and advocate for change.*

If you're someone with lived experience of child sexual abuse and a commitment to advocating for change, will you join us? There are many ways to SHINE as a Survivor Advocate, and telling your story is just one opportunity. Please read on and consider the following guide as you decide whether to tell your story, how you might tell your story, and what you can expect as a result of telling your story.

WHEN SHOULD I HOLD OFF ON TELLING MY STORY?

Telling your story isn't the best option for every survivor of child sexual abuse at any moment in time. You should **not** tell your story today if:

- You are under 18.
- You have never publicly disclosed your abuse before to close friends and family.
- You plan to identify your abuser by name in your story, especially if they have not been convicted of any crime.

- You are unsure or you think you may change your mind about doing this.
- You think you need more time to process what happened and decide how to tell your story.

WHAT ARE SOME GOOD QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE THE STORY?

It can be hard to figure out how to start your SHINE story. One of our goals with this campaign is to shine a light on the thousands of stories of overcoming adversity and hope for the future of our survivors. There are forums that exist to share the darker aspects of the trauma people have experienced, and that is important. However, SHINE is about sharing the triumph over the pain, rather than the pain itself. You can share what you feel comfortable talking about, but in general, the questions below will help you stay focused on your victories over the past. These are just prompts to get you started, and you should feel free to add or alter your approach.

- **Why do you want to share your story?**
- **What has been the most important part of your healing journey?**
- **How are you thriving despite the abuse that you experienced?**
- **In your day-to-day, how do you make the world a better place for kids who are going through what you went through?**
- **What would you say to other survivors?**

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE IDENTIFIED?

It's up to you. Survivors are at all different points in the healing process. Some are public figures or on the speaking circuit, and may want their social media accounts to be tagged. Some will prefer a first name, some just initials, some a pseudonym, and others are simply never going to want to publicly identify themselves. You decide how to be identified. Should we use your first name? No name at all? Do you want to be tagged in your post? Again, your choice. It's your story.

Whatever the level of comfort, we can accept submissions and share stories and images in a way that respects your desired level of privacy. While we prefer that every story include a photo, your photo can be of your face, or not. It can be of a significant object you hold in your hands, or a place that matters to your story, or of you but from an angle where you are not identifiable. It's your decision.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN MY STORY GOES LIVE?

The SHINE Campaign exists because these stories are still rare. You know that you did nothing wrong and didn't deserve the abuse you experienced. Most of the network of supporters on our social channels and, we hope, most of the people in your life, will support you in your courage.

But you know that abusers, trolls, and even family members and friends who refuse to come to terms with abuse can lash out. Telling your story in a public way can sometimes cause problems, and getting your consent to share your story means nothing if we don't inform you of the possible consequences:

- Disbelief, anger, or feelings of blame coming from loved ones
- Bullying or targeted online harassment
- Unwanted contact from your abuser or their agents
- People in your family, workplace, school, or community asking unwelcome questions or assuming untrue things about you
- Unsolicited advice from strangers and friends
- PTSD or trauma triggers

You may encounter friends, family, or acquaintances who would like to stop you from sharing your story, and other well-meaning people may misunderstand or make you uncomfortable. The primary benefit to telling your story is that you will play a part in making it easier for the next survivor to tell theirs. And, you will be joining a movement of individuals who have your back and want your voice to be heard.

Most survivors who have shared their truth, even within their families, have experienced at least some of these problems. The pain was always there; talking about it publicly may just dredge it up again. But if you are not ready to face these challenges, it's ALWAYS okay to change your mind at any time. Just let us know.

HOW DO I TALK ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP TO MY ABUSER?

One word of advice: think hard about whether you want to use any language in your story that makes clear your relationship to your abuser. You may want to say, “it was my stepfather,” or you could say, “it was someone close to me.” It’s your story to tell and it may be important to identify your relationship to your abuser. However, please be aware that it may cause unresolved issues within your family or community to come up again.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

We will always edit or remove a post at your request, even if you have signed a release. However, please understand that once this message goes out on social media, PennCAC and NCA only have control over the social accounts themselves—not how third parties will use the images and stories. While we will make every effort to ensure that you are always comfortable with anything you have shared through our social channels, nothing is ever really deleted from the internet.

HOW WILL MY STORY BE USED?

After your story and photograph are chosen, refined and final version approved by you, PennCAC and/or NCA will post the photo and text to our social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). It may be shared by other accounts, redesigned, or edited down. The point of sharing these stories is to bring public awareness to a) the vast and far-reaching impact that child abuse has, b) the fact that it has no bounds and can be found across all races, ethnicities, income brackets, etc., and c) that it does not have to condemn a person or dictate their life. But most of all, we want the world to know how many brave survivors walk among us.

PHOTOGRAPH AND INTERVIEW RELEASE

I hereby grant permission to the rights of my image and likeness, as well as to exact or approximate content, in whole or in part, of an interview conducted with me or of responses provided by me, to Children's Advocacy Centers of Pennsylvania (PennCAC) and National Children's Alliance (NCA) without payment or any other consideration. I understand that my image and the content of the interview or response may be edited, copied, exhibited, published, or distributed, and I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product wherein my likeness and part(s) or the entirety of my interview appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of my image, interview, and/or other content provided by me. I also understand that this material may be used in diverse educational settings within an unrestricted geographic area.

Photographs and interview content may be used for the following purposes:

- conference presentations
- educational presentations or courses
- informational presentations
- print or digital informational materials
- social media awareness campaigns
- fundraising campaigns

By signing this release, I understand this permission signifies that photographs of me, as well as contents of an interview with me, or other provided content, may be electronically displayed via the Internet or in the public educational setting.

I will be consulted about the use of the photographs and/or interview content for any purpose other than those listed above.

There is no time limit on the validity of this release nor is there any geographic limitation on where these materials may be distributed.

I agree to release National Children's Alliance and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, volunteers and all affiliates in their individual and/or corporate capacities from any and all claims, liabilities, disputes, demands or damages from any action or consequence that may result from the use of the image(s) and interview.

By signing this form I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to be bound thereby. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material for educational, informational, promotional, fundraising, and/or awareness-raising purposes. I certify that I am age 18 or older or am of the age of majority in my jurisdiction, whichever is older.

Full Name _____

Street Address/P.O. Box _____

City _____

State/Prov _____ Postal Code/Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Email Address _____

Signature _____ Date _____