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## Sharing Your Story: A practical guide

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“So how was your trip?”

As if we could just eloquently summarize a transformational experience that dove head-first into one of the most contentious issues on the planet. But alas, we do need to give them an answer. And not only that, we actually have a responsibility to share our story.

### Why?

Because our story has the potential to change lives – we know this because it has already changed ours! Our stories contain elements of the ‘other’ that challenges negative stereotypes and counters single narrative mindsets.

Because our story is intimately tied to the narratives and experiences of our friends in Israel/Palestine. And where their voices cannot be heard, it is important that we speak into those spaces as we are able.

Because our new story opens doors to new relationships with those not in our conventional circles. These relationships are essential to building a diverse movement that crosses faiths, sectors and political allegiances.

### How should we share our story?

For most of us, most of the time, the way we communicate will be in person with friends, family, and colleagues, and therefore with those who love and trust us. However, increasingly sharing happens online, in the troublesome void where anyone can misread, presume, and comment outside the conventional boundaries of an in-person conversation. Yet it’s also in those spaces where our story has enormous potential to reach magnitudes of people. It’s certainly a scenario of risk-reward.

In whatever way you are sharing your story, we invite you to consider the following 7 pointers. They are not exhaustive or perfect, but in our experience, these are 7 quick

reminders that will help you effectively share your heart in a way that is heard, even by those who might really disagree with you.

### **7 tips to effectively sharing your story:**

#### **1. Communicate to be heard**

How you are heard is more important than what you want to say. The most effective way to be heard is to **be a good listener** – ask good questions, be legitimately engaged in order to understand where your listener is: what are their biases? Are they new to the issue? How can I meet them where they are? Take the time to listen. Listening and being heard is obviously harder online, but it is possible and you can model it well.

#### **2. Tell your own story**

The real unassailable story is the story of your own journey and transformation. While you may want to give voice to your friends' stories, you are never going to be able to tell their story with accuracy and full impact. So tell the story of how you met people whose example changed you. Similarly, as important as facts are and as much as you try, accept that you do not possess mastery of all of them. The important thing to communicate is *your experience*, which is hard for people to reject.

#### **3. Focus on the big picture: PEOPLE.**

Conflict is about people so our task is to not get bogged down in competing stats or tit-for-tat/ who-is-to-blame details but instead, focus on the people at the center of the conflict: other friends whose lives are consistently upended by war. Telling your story in a way that always comes back to that core truth of loving people is an effective way to engage someone who is even strongly opposed to you theologically or politically. Our friends at The Global Immersion Project put this well: "Verbal debate is a sign of privilege that needs to be leveraged for the flourishing of others, not used to prove our point."

#### **4. Be intentionally pro/pro/pro**

Remember there is no future for anyone without a future for everyone, so share stories from both sides! This may be especially important if your Telos experience shattered your worldview and now you wish to fly the flag for the 'other' that you used to oppose. We want to avoid implicit bias and being put in an either/or camp that represents a false and destructive binary that has fueled this conflict for too long. Be explicitly pro/pro/pro and model a different and better way of engaging that tells the legitimate narratives of both sides.

#### **5. Give Grace**

To yourself and others. We are ALL on a journey. Your audience hasn't seen and experienced what you've seen. They need the opportunity to go on that journey. They need to wrestle, just as you did. And it's harder if they haven't yet shared your experience and had the chance to confront their biases head on in the eyes of a child who could be their own. Give them grace to go on that journey and the space to begin it in your communications.

6. **Communicate from a place of love and hope, not a place of trauma and anger**  
Humanize your friends in Israel/Palestine so your audience has an opportunity to fall in love with them. They are more than victims, they are dreamers and doers, believers and lovers, people like us with hopes and aspirations. Speak from love, not from anger, otherwise your story will likely fall on deaf ears. For if your trauma speaks, it will likely be too much for your listener to bear before their hearts have been broken too. MLK's famous words were **"I have a dream" NOT "We're living a nightmare."**
7. Most importantly... **Build Authentic Relationships**  
Relationship is everything. People are not fodder to be converted on an issue; they are friends and neighbors who are to be loved unconditionally, regardless of their theology or opinion on a complex and emotional geopolitical topic. And when they are truly loved by us, they are more likely to see the world as we see it. A good friend of Telos has said that peacemaking might just begin with the three words "Let's have lunch". Put relationships first, really care about who you're talking with, and they might just listen to you.

Remember: you are not alone! We are here to guide you as you share your story with others. So please reach out if you have any clarifying questions or would like us to approve any language that will be public.

Thank you in advance for all the courageous ways in which you will communicate the impact of the experience you had with us.

Best of luck!