



# STORY MATTERS

## Writing the Story of Your Illness

Stories are vital to community. They are how we connect and learn about who we are, why we're here, and how we belong. Story preserves history and elicits laughter. It plunges us to the depths of ourselves and sets us soaring the skies.

Story is the tale of our lives. And it matters.

Yet writing your story can be challenging and may not seem worth the time and effort. Add an unexpected illness, and wrestling your thoughts to the page can seem nearly impossible.

*Where do I start? What do I write? Will anyone care? Does it even matter?*

We've been there. We've asked those questions. Often. And we've discovered, to our surprise, that our stories are who we are, where we begin. They connect us, tearing down walls and shattering isolation.

*For story is where hope begins.*

As we write the stories of our lives, perspective shifts, and we begin to see from a distance what we were unable to see in the moment.

If you've ever thought about writing the story of your illness, we'd love to help. We've created thoughtful questions and helpful tips to get you started. But remember, these are only a place to begin.

*This is your story.*

Visit [chronic-joy.org](https://chronic-joy.org) for more resources.



### HELPFUL TIPS

1. **Be authentic.** There is no right or wrong way to tell your story.
2. **Write conversationally,** using words that speak to you.
3. **Explain what others may not understand** (eg: Few have heard of DHE, infusions that make patients feel incredibly sick, yet most are familiar with chemo - a "known" comparison helps).
4. **Including questions** can open the door to conversation.
5. **Choosing a moment** to write about rather than trying to tell your whole story start-to-finish is a more accessible place to start.
6. **Weigh the details** - provide enough to add vibrancy and depth, but not so many that readers get lost.
7. **Allow your words to find their way.** Write first. Edit later.
8. **Relax,** these words can be written *just for you.*

### QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU BEGIN

1. What is your typical day like?
2. What was your life like before chronic illness?
3. How are you different today?
4. What is the most challenging part of your life?
5. What loss has been most significant?
6. What has been your lowest point?
7. If you could have one thing back, what would it be? Why?
8. How are your relationships impacted by illness?
9. How have your expectations of yourself and others changed?
10. How has your walk with God changed?
11. Where have you found hope today?
12. How have you experienced God's grace in illness?
13. How do you celebrate the small victories?
14. What is the most unexpected blessing of chronic illness?
15. What character quality have you gained through illness?
16. What does courage look like to you?
17. What does strength look like in illness?
18. What do you wish others knew about your illness?
19. Describe your illness in five words? Why did you choose those words?
20. What encouragement can you offer someone who is walking through chronic illness?
21. What unexpected circumstance in your life has become a blessing?
22. How do you handle pain and disappointment? Use an example.
23. How has God turned your weakness into strength?
24. What is the greatest impact of chronic illness on your life?
25. Contrast who you were before illness with who you are now.

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