

Personal Stories Project for the PA Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2021

This message is for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their family members, friends and support staff:

We are looking for Personal Stories -- Written Essays and Video Stories -- from individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). We will be showcasing the Essays and Videos at the PA Autism Training Conference (PATC), which will be held virtually from October 5-7, 2021.

We think it's important to feature the experiences and voices of autistic individuals during our conference. To do this, we are looking for individuals to share their experiences by submitting a Personal Story. If your Essay or Video is chosen, it will be displayed in a collection of media during PATC and will be available online throughout the conference and beyond. And you will receive \$100 (per person) for your package of entries (whether one or two entries). You may submit a Written Essay or a Video Story (or both). Note: We will accept essays/videos from 20 people on a first come, first served basis. Only those 20 people will be compensated.

PATC 2020 Personal Stories -- To look at the 15 Written Essays, 5 Animated Videos, 1 Video Story and 2 Video Interviews used for last year's PATC, visit MyODP at: <https://www.myodp.org/course/view.php?id=1694>. You can enter as a guest or you can create an Account. Once logged in, scroll down until you get to "PATC 2020 Personal Stories."

Parameters for Written Essays and Video Stories

A note to family members, friends, and support staff: Please ask the individuals with ASD in your lives to consider writing an Essay and/or creating a Video Story, and offer to help them with whatever support they may need to share their story. The individual also has the option to be interviewed in a Video.

Deadline: August 1, 2021

Where to send your Personal Story: Please email all Essays and Videos to info@paautism.org with the Subject: PATC Personal Stories.

Contact information: Include your name, email address and phone number so we can contact you if your entry is selected. When we share the essays and videos during PATC, we can use your real name or a pseudonym. The choice is entirely yours. *However, we strongly encourage you to use your real name as a byline because doing so can help reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions. We want to empower you to share your story and to be proud of who you are.*



You have 3 options:

WRITTEN ESSAY

Objective: We want you to tell us your story, in your own words, about your Journey with Autism. Speak from the heart. An Essay is the most effective way to use your experience as a learning resource for others.

Length of story: 250 to 1500 words (about 3 pages).

Style: Please use short, simple words, short sentences and relatively short paragraphs.

If you submit a Written Essay, you will have the option for the PATC team to turn your Essay into an **Animated Video**. If you are interested in this option, include that note in your email when submitting and we will send you additional details. The PATC team has editing guidelines for this.

VIDEO STORY

How to do it: You might use your computer (type “Camera” on Windows 10 for the App) or smartphone to record your Video, or have someone record you with a camcorder.

Length of Video: 1 to 5 minutes. (The PATC Team may edit Videos for content and length. Any changes will be discussed with the person who submitted the Video.) For a Video Story, it may be best to keep to one simple theme. Express emotion; share your feelings about what you feel strongly about. You can employ text (“What are my biggest challenges?”) to structure your Video, photos of things or other people, and other video.

Example: To see a very good Video Story, click on the link on the previous page for the PATC 2020 Personal Stories and watch “Art and Autism = Artism – David A. Karasow.”

VIDEO INTERVIEW

If you would like to be interviewed on Video by a PATC team member, email us by August 1, 2021. In the interview, a PATC team member will ask you questions and you will respond.

Examples: Click on the link on the previous page for the PATC 2020 Personal Stories and watch the Video Interviews of Dr. Nathaniel Geyer and Thomas Hassell.

Writing Ideas for the Written Essay and Video Story

Write about yourself and/or your Journey with Autism:

- Your name, age, your living situation, date of ASD diagnosis.
- Your status: Are you working, a volunteer, a student?
- What are the biggest challenges in your life, past or present?
- What are your coping strategies to deal with situations?
- What successes have you had?
- What are your goals for the future?
- What is your job like (paid or volunteer)?
- What are the challenges of living with autism? Is autism a gift?
- What does your typical day look like?
- What is your favorite pastime or hobby? How did you get started with this?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What is your family life like?
- What is one thing about autism that you wish people would know?
- What advice do you have for a young person with ASD?
- Who has been the biggest influence on your life in your autism journey?
- What three things have you learned about yourself and society?
- Show us your favorite coping strategy. How does it help you?
- How do you use technology for entertainment? How do you use technology to stay connected to people? To receive support and services?



Here are some additional Themes that you could choose from:

- As the country opens up more and more due to more people getting vaccinated for COVID-19, what are your thoughts on your being more active around people in-person? Has this past year been hard for you due to the COVID restrictions?
- What has been your experience with employment? Has it been hard to hold down a job?
- Do you have many friends? Have you struggled in this area? How have you made friends?

You don't have to answer all the questions for your Essay or Video; the questions are there to give you ideas of where to start. If you feel comfortable, please submit a picture to go with your Essay or Video. The picture can be of you or something related to your story.

Please Note: The PATC team has the right to make minor edits to any written or video submission. However you will be able to review and provide final approval on all pieces, including the animated videos, before they are used in the conference.

Story Telling Tips: Please click on this link for suggestions on how to create a good Personal Story: [Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling.pdf \(google.com\)](#)

Contributors from 2020: If you submitted a Written Essay for the Personal Stories Project for PATC in 2020, please provide new content for your Essay or Video. Perhaps a single Theme. You can choose from the above ideas, if you wish.

**We can't wait to read your stories! Thank you for considering this project.
The PATC Team**

