

A guide to telling your story

Writing down your experiences, especially when they relate to death, dying and grief, can be tricky. Where do you start? Here are some suggestions to help you tell your story. It's helpful for any story to include these points. However, include more information if you think it is appropriate.

If you are writing about yourself:

1. **Tell us a bit about you.** Your life, family, career, hobbies, hopes and dreams.
2. **When did you first become unwell?** How did you learn of your terminal diagnosis? What impact did it have on you?
3. **Who did you discuss your end of life with?** How did you come to know about voluntary assisted dying (VAD)?
4. **When did you decide that VAD was an option you wanted to pursue?**
5. **How did the VAD application process go?** Did you find it straightforward or were there challenges? If so, how did you cope with them?
6. **Did you give your healthcare teams any feedback?**
7. **Are you already in possession of the VAD medications?**
8. **How would you like your death to be? What are your plans?**
3. **When did they first become ill?** How did their diagnosis come about and what was their reaction?
4. **When did they first raise the subject of voluntary assisted dying?** How did they go about applying?
5. **Were the person's family/friends/loved ones supportive of their choice?** If not, why not? Did this affect the VAD process?
6. **Where were they treated and what treatments did they receive?** If relevant, you can include the name of the institution and location.
7. **When and how did the person die?** Was there a difference between what you or your loved one expected and what actually happened?
8. **How would you describe the VAD experience as a whole?**

If you are writing about someone else:

1. **Who was the person you are writing about?** Imagine sitting down with a friend who has never met this person. What would you tell them to paint a picture? Start with their name and what relationship they were to you.
2. **Tell us something about their life that was important to them.** For example, their career, hobbies, hopes and dreams.

Please be aware that writing about these subjects can be helpful, but it can also bring up strong emotions. These may be directly connected and perfectly understandable (for example crying while you write) but they may also surface at unexpected moments and be difficult to reconcile.

If at any moment you struggle with these experiences, please reach out for help. Your GP can refer you to a local counsellor or you can call **Lifeline** on **13 11 14** (24 hours a day).