**Hazards Storytelling Exercise**

*Quick Tip: Sharing personal experiences can be emotional and make participants feel vulnerable. To address this, consult the* ***Trauma-Informed Approach*** *and lead participants in “Stress Busters” grounding techniques.*

## Objectives

* Listen to community members’ experiences with hazards and build a foundational understanding of how hazards impact your community.
* Learn what hazards affect the community, how community members are made vulnerable to disasters, and what helps them get through it.
* Strengthen social ties and create commonality and understanding of other people’s perspectives.

## Preparation

**Who will be involved:** facilitator, participants, core team

**How long will it take:** 1-1.5 hours

**Materials:** copies of storytelling handout (last page of this document), writing supplies

**Other things to consider:** The facilitator will play a key role

**Recommended ERB Resources:**

**Trauma-Informed Approach** on addressing emotional aspects of this exercise

**Storytelling** on why ERB uses this exercise and how to do so effectively

**Data Ethics** on protecting participants’ privacy and ownership over their stories

## Instructions for the facilitator

### Setting up the Exercise

1. Assign roles to core team members:

**Helpers** check in on how groups are doing

**Demo volunteers** model a round of sharing stories

**Recorder** takes notes and inputs information into the **Key Takeaways Form**

1. Create a space where participants feel comfortable sharing openly and listening attentively. *Storytelling can be emotional, especially for people who have experienced trauma from past disasters or chronic social and environmental problems*.

Lead a Stress Buster grounding techniques (see next page)

Consider using these ground rules

**Ground Rules**

* Be a good listener by showing attention and respect.
* Keep personal information provided by others in confidence.
* Anyone can choose not to participate at any time.
* People express themselves in different ways. Give them the benefit of the doubt.
* Take care of yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed - breathe, drink water, stand up, or step out.

**Stress Busters**

**Bellow Breaths**

Start with everyone standing (who is able). Make sure you have space to spread your arms wide. Take five deep breaths, raising your hands over your head with each inhalation, and lowering your arms with each exhalation.

**Tune into Your 5 Senses**

Sit comfortably. As you breathe deeply, for each inhalation, focus your attention to each of your five senses in turn: Touch, sound, smell, taste, and sight.

### Running the Exercise

1. Distribute the **storytelling handout** and break participants up into groups of three.
2. Explain the group roles. Group members will switch roles with each round.

**Storyteller.** Shares a **3-to-5-minute story** that addresses one of the prompts

**Listener.** Listens. After the storyteller is done, asks follow-up questions

**Notetaker**. Writes down notes on important points of the story

1. Additional explanation if needed:

Demo volunteers do a condensed round (**1 min.** story, **1 min.** follow-up)

Discuss active listening strategies

1. Give everyone **3 to 5 minutes** to prepare a story. Consider using of the prompts below.
2. Round 1:

The storyteller has **3 to 5 minutes** to share their story.

The listener has **3 to 5 minutes** to ask 1 or 2 follow-up questions.

The notetaker takes notes during the story and follow-up.

1. Round 2: Everyone switches roles and a new person shares their story.
2. Round 3. The final switch!
3. Discussion

Reconvene as a large group.

Use discussion prompts below or other questions to guide the conversation.

The recorder writes down key issues and themes they hear.

**Hazards Storytelling Prompts**

* Tell a story about a time when you experienced a disaster or emergency. Think about: Where were you, what happened, how were you affected, and what did you do afterward?
* Tell a story about a concern you have about your community
* Tell a story about a time when you helped someone or they helped you in an emergency

**Discussion Prompts**

* Who would like to share something about your story with the group?
* Did you notice any similarities or differences in the experiences you shared?
* How are people affected differently by disasters?
* What were common things that helped people get through the experience?

### Customizing the Exercise

* If you have limited time create story sharing groups of 2 instead of 3 and combine the notetaker and listener roles.
* This exercise is adaptable to many different situations. You can ask participants to focus on a specific type of incident such as wildfire or community concern such as health.
* If you want to encourage positive stories that showcase community strengths and assets, use a storytelling prompt such as “Describe a time when you worked together with a group of people in your community to address a problem.”
* If participants need a quick reset after finishing a round, do another **Stress Buster** grounding technique. It helps people release tension by connecting to their breath and can be made more fun or serious as needed.
* If you want to capture more detail about the stories for the **Key Takeaways**, ask participants if they are willing to share their notes on the Handouts.

## Output

Synthesize the recorder’s notes into key issues and themes that reflect participants’ experiences with disasters (or your customized storytelling topic). These will get input into **Key Takeaways**. See the example below.

Techniques for how to synthesize this information are in the **Storytelling** resource.

Use this synthesis in **Assess** to figure out what additional data on hazards, equity, and resilience to collect.

In **Strategize**, use it to identify Action Areas.

**Example Key Takeaways from Hazards Storytelling**

* Flooding is becoming a bigger problem in Park View neighborhood. When it rains heavily, stormwater drains back up and water pools in the street. People can’t get to work or school.
* People are worried about safety from an abandoned factory building. Teens explore the building for fun and there were a lot of chemicals used that might have seeped into the soil.
* Many people talked about how neighbors helped neighbors during the last big ice storm. Sharing food and water, letting each other use a cell phone, or shoveling cars out.

## Next Steps

In the ERB tool, use the synthesis of the Recorder’s notes to answer Question 4 on the **Key Takeaways Form** **on Assessment**.

The next page in ERB is for the Workshop 1 activity, **Explore Future Scenarios**.

## Hazards Storytelling Handout

## Instructions

1. Each person takes on a role, switching with each round:
   1. **Storyteller.** Shares a **3-to-5-minute story** that addresses one of the prompts
   2. **Listener.** Listens. After the storyteller is done, asks follow-up questions
   3. **Notetaker**. Writes down notes on important points of the story
2. Introduce yourself to your group of three. Everyone takes **3 to 5 minutes** to prepare their stories using the prompts below. Decide who will share their story first.
3. The storyteller will then take **3 to** **5 minutes** to share their story while the listener listens and the notetaker takes notes on what they are hearing.
4. The listener has **3 to 5 minutes** to ask 1 or 2 follow-up questions; the notetaker takes notes.
5. After **10 minutes**, or whenever the group is finished, switch to a new person so they can share their story, then rotate a final time so each person has a chance to share.

**Ground Rules**

* Be a good listener by showing attention and respect.
* Keep personal information provided by others in confidence. ​
* Anyone can choose not to participate at any time.
* People express themselves in different ways. Give them the benefit of the doubt.
* Take care of yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed - breathe, drink water, stand up, or step out.

**Storytelling Prompt**

Tell a story about a time when you experienced a disaster or emergency, such as a storm, heat wave, flood, or fire. Think about: Where were you, what happened, how were you affected, and what did you do afterward?

**Example Follow-up Questions**

* How did the disaster affect others in your community?
* What helped you get through it?

**Note-taking space**