



# Preparing to Share Our Stories



Sharing abortion stories is a personal and vulnerable experience, and effective in eradicating abortion and reproductive stigma. As we share our abortion stories, it is important for us to take time to reflect on our motivations for sharing, what aspects of our stories we want to share with others, and how our identities impact our experiences. This document will help you reflect on why you want to share, what parts of your story you want to have an impact on others, and how to prepare yourself to share.

## Impact of Sharing

- Why did you decide to share your abortion story?
- What do you want people to know about you? What is beyond your abortion story?
- What feels easier and more natural to share? What feels more difficult to share?
- What are the dominant narratives about abortion & people who have abortions that you want to push back on?

## Our Identities

- Are there messages you learned about abortion in your family? How did those messages impact your experience, both positively and negatively?
- Are there racial, ethnic, gender identity, class, sexuality, immigrant, ability, religious, or other identities that impacted your abortion experience?
- How did your geographic location or community political climate impact your abortion experience?
- If you've had more than one abortion, do you want to share all of your stories? What do you want people to know about each abortion you had? How were they similar? How were they different?



## Barriers to Access

- Were there barriers you faced when seeking care? How did you navigate them?
- How did you pay for your abortion? If you had insurance, were you able to use it, why or why not? Did you have to borrow money from someone or call an abortion fund? How did that experience make you feel?
- Was there someone who helped you navigate barriers? How did they help you? What stands out about that person to you?
- Was there a barrier that you were able to bypass because of your privilege? How did that impact your abortion experience?
- What support did you—or didn't you—have during your abortion? How do you think that impacted you?
- Did you experience stigma, either from other or internally from yourself?



**Take a few minutes to journal about 2-3 of these questions & get yourself thinking about what you'd like to share in your story.**



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Abortion is a common experience, but stigma and shame keep us from connecting with our friends and loved ones who have similar experiences. **By sharing our stories, we can free ourselves from the internalized stigma that might be eating at us, and find comfort in those who show us compassion.** But how do we know what parts of our story to share, what to hold on to until the time is right, or what keep for ourselves? Taking time to reflect on what we want to share, & what we don't want to share, can help us find the answer. Remember, you don't have to share all of your story at once or all of the time, and you can absolutely keep some details just for yourself. It's your story, so it's your choice.

"I would be comfortable sharing these parts of my story in the immediate future."

"I might share these parts of my story in the future, but for now I'll keep them to myself."

"I want to keep these parts of my story just for me."

A **trigger** is an external event that evokes an instantaneous negative emotional response. Triggers can be historical, collective, silent, and/or highly personal. When we are triggered, we are sometimes catapulted into a heightened emotional state during which clear thinking and forward movement can be especially challenging. This can happen when we're sharing our stories or when someone reacts poorly to our vulnerability. If you are triggered, take a moment to think about how you'd like to prepare yourself, respond in the moment and afterwards, and which loved ones you'd like to support you.

## Write Your Reaction Plan

Take 15 minutes to write out how you might react and how you'd prefer to react if triggered. Use the following steps to help you, and think about who you can call on for support.

## Step 1: Name the Trigger

You can only name it for yourself, not for others. And, you can only name it when you know what they are. What are the behaviors or events that trigger you?

## Step 2: Create Your Space

Resist the impulse to react immediately. Take a minute for yourself. Think about your reaction plan. Remove yourself from the situation, if necessary and accessible.

## Step 3: Shift Your State

Breathe. Move your energy. Allow yourself to feel your deeper feelings, if that feels safe. Anchor yourself.

## Step 4: Respond to the Situation

Enact your plan for response to triggers. Address the situation, if you're ready and that opportunity is accessible.

**Suggestion: Before you engage in storytelling, talk to a loved one or friend about your plan to share and how you'd like them to support you.**