

Pro's and Con's to Publically Sharing Lived Experience

Survivors in the anti-trafficking movement are in a unique position. Professional and personal lives come together in an exceptional way. The decision to share one's background is a personal decision that should be one's own. It should never be exploited or forced upon anyone for any reason.

Some good questions to ask are:

- What is the purpose of sharing?
- Who is it benefiting?
- What, if anything do I want to share?
- Am I ready for this information to be public knowledge?
- How will this affect my life 5-10 years down the road?

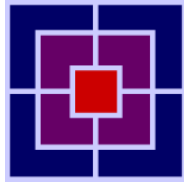
Range of Sharing

There is also a range of sharing. You may want to share you are a Survivor/Thriver but may not be comfortable sharing any detail about that experience. You may want to share only what is helpful for that specific place. You may not care what is shared. You may share one time and decide that it isn't for you. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, **it is your choice.**

This is in no way to discourage any Survivor/Thriver from sharing. It is simply to take a look at some positives and negatives and figure out what is right for you. Once information is out in the open it can be difficult to control. In reviewing the list below, keep in mind that feelings about sharing are subjective. Each person and situation is unique. What is positive for one person, may be negative for another and vice versa. This list is by no means all inclusive, but will give some points to consider so that your decision will be as well informed as possible.

Pro's to Sharing as a Survivor/Thriver Sharing Information about Your Trafficking Experience

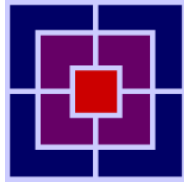
- Sharing from a place of personal experience brings a certain power and authenticity to what is being said
- May be empowering to share, be heard and see change
- May shape and influence ideas, policies, and the way organizations operate
- May encourage other survivors, front-line workers, and those working in the anti-trafficking movement
- Provides opportunity to be a voice for others still in their trafficking situation/s
- May give those engaged in this work knowledge of how to better identify and assist in trafficking situations



- Is a powerful teaching tool
- May give others hope
- May be an aspect of personal healing for some
- May open the door for continued opportunities within the anti-trafficking movement
- May open the door for new positive relationships professionally or personally with people who are interested in anti-trafficking engagement
- May provide personal empowerment such as:
 - Breaking false fears/beliefs
 - Learning to be more authentic
 - Growing stronger as a person
 - Caring less about other's opinions

Con's to Sharing as a Survivor/Sharing Information about Your Trafficking Experience

- In many situations outside confidential settings, you will probably not have control over where the information goes
- Information shared may be available to people close to you that you may or may not know about your experience
- Information may be made public:
 - Individuals accessing public information could be a potential employer, a potential romantic partner, new and former friends, people at places of worship, co-workers, family, people who interact with your children or significant other
 - The information is out there forever, in ten years someone may be able to find information about you
 - May have social, relational, emotional, psychological, or professional consequences
- Sharing may trigger memories of your trafficking experience and cause you to re-live trauma or have a negative impact on your personal and/or professional relationships.
- After learning of your trafficking experience, people may intentionally or unintentionally place you in a box. They may view you as someone who needs to be helped, pitied, or taken care of.
 - In the professional world sometimes Survivors/Thrivers are put in a "survivor box", in which they are invited to share only their story or are severely limited in participation of professional capacities, despite having ample education or having proved oneself as a professional. While being addressed, this still occurs.



- It can be frustrating to be viewed for a singular aspect of one's life, "survivorhood" instead of as a whole person with various talents, abilities and other life experiences.
- You cannot undo the decision to share publically; you can only set boundaries on what is shared in the future and ask others to act professionally and respectfully with information being shared.
- People may say unhelpful or even hurtful things to you, intentionally or unintentionally.
- The media may want to interview you and may or may not represent you accurately.

Considerations for Sharing:

- Many organizations are not trauma informed or survivor centered.
- Some organizations who claim to be trauma informed or survivor centered are not.
- Some organizations want a Survivor/Thriver to "show" to the public but in private do not actually value shared input.
- You may be asked to share your story or join an organization without the offer of compensation .
 - Note: Organizations have varying budgets. Your choice to volunteer is your choice alone. Asking about compensation is a way to receive clarification. As many Survivors/Thrivers are generous people, make sure you are practicing good self-care and not spreading yourself too thin with volunteer work.

Remember, sharing is your choice alone. Your contribution is valuable and unique. Survivors/Thrivers are important in moving forward efforts and helping ensure changes that better serve youth and children who are at-risk or have experienced any form of exploitation.

Thank you.

Diana Cisneros
Empowered Survivor