

FUERZA

On finding inner strength to build our new normal;
A reflective manual inspired by Puerto Rican
oral history narratives of Hurricane María

By: Nairy AbdElShafy

* Fuerza: Spanish for "strength"



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Photographs and figure drawings by: Nairy AbdElShafy

Photographs were taken in Puerto Rico in January, 2019.

Contact: nairyz@gmail.com

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Preface

I first became interested in Puerto Rico when I made a Puerto Rican friend back when I was living in Costa Rica in 2009. I'm originally from Egypt, and it always amazes me how ignorant I am of the countries of our world, and how little I know about them. My friend and I have stayed in touch over the years, and, due to his political interests, he was very enthusiastic about the revolution phase in Egypt and always asked for updates and information. In 2017, he asked me to do a virtual presentation on my work in Egypt to an international relations class he was teaching about the Middle East. Before I could deliver the presentation, Hurricane María hit -a category 5 hurricane- on September 20th, 2017. What I watched and heard on the news was a fraction of the reality experienced by Puerto Ricans at the time. My understanding was that -after a while- all had settled back to normal. However, in my irregular correspondence with my friend and our attempts to reschedule the presentation, I came to understand that for a long while after -even until this day- normal isn't the case.

Curious about life in the aftermath of the hurricane, in 2019, I conducted my oral history research in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans lacked -and to some extent still lack- access to basic services such as food and shelter, running water, electricity or the internet. Enterprises shut down, universities were closed, and many students became homeless.

“Just as umbrellas move fluidly with the wind, Puerto Rico is a place that flows and majestically embraces every challenge it faces”

Paseo de Sombrillas

San Juan

In the aftermath of the hurricane and in light of the island's protracted financial crisis and minimal aid support, all sectors were and are affected, creating austere living conditions within challenging daily struggles.

Through my research work and oral history interviews conducted there, in January 2019, I was hoping to better understand the situation of the aftermath, a little over a year after the hurricane. What I found was a humbling energy for openness and sharing, and an inner strength for rebuilding a stable life again.

My narrators expressed the idea of creating a "new" normal, as the "normal" they recognized and were familiar with can probably never be reached again.

Even though I had studied political science, I don't necessarily consider myself a political person, and I usually don't make it a point to discuss politics. Yet, I regularly found myself engaged in deep political discussions and reflections -with my narrators- on our governments' roles, popular demands, and, most surprisingly, similarities in coping mechanisms and ways of finding strength to carry on when all else is lost and faith in formal structures has weakened.

My biggest surprise was how much I could relate to what they shared with me and reflect on it from my experience after the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Similar to my experience in the aftermath of the revolution, Puerto Ricans also lived through a curfew, being forced to spend hours at home without electricity or internet access. I was fascinated by how individuals experiencing loss at a systemic and country-wide level, might resort to similar coping mechanisms and efforts to build a new, normal day to day life while struggling to find their own inner strength to stay motivated and carry on.

Through *FUERZA*, I am hoping to create a reflective manual, translating the stories that were shared with me into step-by-step activities that can help the manual users better understand themselves, the world around them and help them find their inner strength to build their new normal and routine.

The manual doesn't provide a substitute to professional help and support. Individuals process and handle loss, grief, anger and trauma differently and the manual addresses only one aspect of coping through finding strength and resilience.

I hope this manual supports its users to develop the emotional resilience individuals can achieve in the absence of formal social structures, specifically in the wake of natural disasters and catastrophes.

Inspiration and Methodology



This manual aims to provide simple, practical activities that can be adapted for different contexts to help individuals find inner strength to cope with post traumatic experiences. It is a working manual and an open source for any interested individuals and organizations to add to and develop.

Oral History Narratives

The ideas and questions addressed here are inspired by my analysis of over 30 hours of recorded narratives with Puerto Ricans who experienced Hurricane María.

These narratives were recorded through oral history interviews I conducted in November and December 2018 in New York City, USA; and in January 2019 in Caguas, Puerto Rico, as part of my graduate thesis research as a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University's Oral History Master's Program.

The research in Puerto Rico was made possible through the support of Mi María Project and Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

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Mi María Project is an oral history for social justice project in Puerto Rico, led by Professor Ricia Chansky at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. The project is training over 100 undergraduate students to do ethical collection, transcription, and translation of Hurricane María narratives. Selected narratives will be featured in a book published by Haymarket Books and the Voice of Witness program. Others will be shared in an international group exhibition on climate justice produced by the Humanities Action Lab.

The interviews covered many topics, ranging from the narrators' detailed descriptions of the hurricane experience and their life in the aftermath to their reflections on the unique relationship between Puerto Rico and the USA and their expectations and aspirations for the future.

For my analysis:

- I focused on the narrators' experiences in the aftermath, their development of coping mechanisms and the effects of art and music in healing and building a "new normal" for daily life.
- I based the activities' design on my reflections and interpretations of the narratives combined with my own experiences after the revolution in Egypt in 2011.

My work as a facilitator and an educator in the design of educational activities on peace education, experiential and intercultural learning supported me in the analysis of the narratives and their translations to practical activities.

Manual Structure

FUERZA is made up of five core modules: two are narrative modules and three are practical activity-based ones.

Narrative Modules [interview excerpts]

Is Jesus **Puerto Rican**?
The **Dungeon Master**

Practical Modules [activities]

ME
The world around **ME**
MY new normal

The narrative modules are compiled and edited excerpts from the oral history interviews that inspired the activities in the practical modules.

They center on concepts of identity, pride, unity and the search for resilience and strength.

Inspired by oral history methodology; where the narrator is at the center of the recorded narrative, **the practical modules** revolve around the “ME”: first as an individual entity, then, in relation to the surrounding environment and lastly, in relation to the creation of an adapted environment.

They include a set of questions and suggested activities to guide the user in a learning journey.

Throughout the different sections are references to **Sparks** as supporting tips. The idea behind these **Sparks** was inspired by a narrator's mentioning how playing board games after the hurricane helped inspire him and his friends:

*"... to do something that inspires us every day, that gives us that -I don't know- **spark** of: Hey, let's make this a wonderful day."* José E. Vázquez Moreno (Kiko), 29, Caguas-Puerto Rico

Methodology

The activities are designed to create an experiential learning journey that is interactive and thought provoking. The manual aims to be user- friendly, for users to individually implement the activities and/ or help facilitate them with larger groups.

To achieve this aim, each module has its own set of **ASK Indicators** and **Experiential Learning Steps**.

All interview excerpts used in the manual are of English interviews,
no translation was required.

ASK Indicators

This refers to the design of learning indicators that are measured in:

A: attitudes; the willingness to do something

S: skills; the ability to do something

K: knowledge; the understanding of something

The assumption is that we enjoy a full learning experience once we develop and learn through these three levels (A,S,K) combined and not just one.

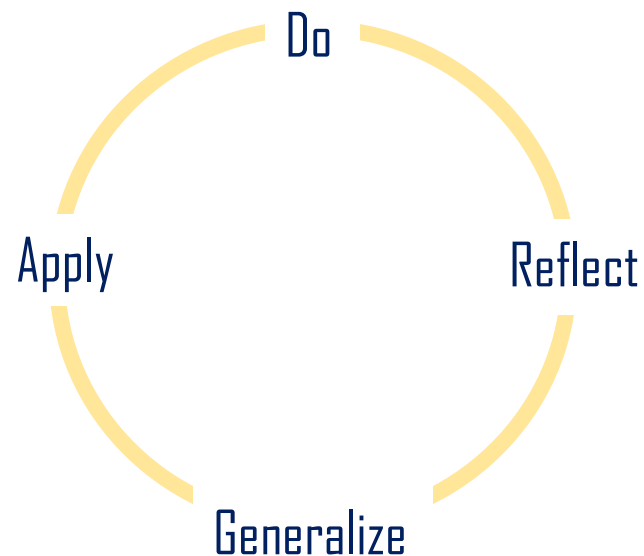
The ASK indicators act as a reference that should be revisited after each activity to reflect if they have been achieved or not. They also work as a self- fulfilling prophecy, influencing our thoughts and behaviors entering into an activity.

ASK Indicators:

CISV International. (2019). Section 3: ASK for Active Global Citizens. *BIG ED: Big Education Guide for Active Global Citizenship*. (pp.15- 17). Retrieved from: https://issuu.com/cisvinternational/docs/t-02_big_ed_a4_view_1128_/20

Experiential Learning Steps

The experiential learning theory (developed by David A. Kolb) believes that experiential learning is holistic and most effective when it goes through four different stages:



Experiential Learning Theory:

Kolb, David. (2015). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc. And CISV International. (2019). Section 6: Learning by Doing. *BIG ED: Big Education Guide for Active Global Citizenship*. (pp.37-39). Retrieved from: https://issuu.com/cisvinternational/docs/t-02_big_ed_a4_view_1128_/20

Concrete Experience (Do)

This is usually the first stage, the stage of doing something, engaging in some sort of action and hands-on experience.

Reflective Observation (Reflect)

This is the stage where one starts thinking about:

- The experience itself and the feelings associated with it (individual level).
- Then, what it could mean and the reasons behind what happened.

Abstract Conceptualization (Generalize)

This is the follow-up stage to personal reflection, where reflection is made on a broader scale:

- A general reflection and abstraction of when/ where else these experiences could happen again, generating similar feelings, and what other situations could trigger it.

This is also the stage that considers the general context of the situation and its social structure and influences: political, economic, etc.

This and the previous stage could also be reached through discussion and support with others and could be experienced through a longer time frame and not necessarily directly after the action. One could also move between the **Reflect** and **Generalize** stages while in the process of reflection (reflecting on micro and macro levels).

Active Experimentation (Apply)

This is the final stage, where, based on conscious understanding, one makes informed decisions about what to do next and starts applying his/her learning. It is the stage where learning transforms into application. In many cases, the application phase creates a new action (**Do**) and brings us back to the first stage, and so the cycle repeats with a new learning experience.

Narrative Modules

Oral history interview excerpts



Is Jesus Puerto Rican?

Narrative excerpts on Puerto Rican pride,
identity and sense of unity

"I am Puerto Rican but I was born here in New York City..."

...For university, I decided to go to the University of Puerto Rico, which is always sort of- like, it's always a dream for a lot of Puerto Ricans- the idea of reverse migration. And that's mostly because Puerto Ricans, they have U.S citizenship; they don't need passports to travel back and forth from Puerto Rico to the mainland, so there's always been these channels of migration to and from Puerto Rico.

... My dad -especially- always sort of, created like an air of mystique around the island of Puerto Rico. Uhm, he was always telling us that Puerto Ricans were special people. That -you know- we were the best athletes and the best actors and actresses, and the beauty queens, so, from a very like early age, we're indoctrinated into this idea of Puerto Rican exceptionalism. Which uh, is interesting...

To the point where I like, when I was a child -like 5 or 6 years old- I remember asking my mother:

'Mom, is Jesus Puerto Rican?'

So, that's the level to which my father, like, tried to convince us about how excellent we were"

Anibal Arocho, 36, New York City- USA

"My dad is a person who would not leave the island..."

I think for some people it's probably the same, this is their life that they had done and for them, trying to start a new life, somewhere else is just, maybe, a challenge that they would not try to do, you know?

And I feel that, what we call *El Orgullo*: the pride to be Puerto Rican, and to just rise up again. I've seen a lot of people take that really really seriously.

... I think that -you know- in Puerto Rico, people have a big pride. People believe in going back again, and rising up again and getting stronger and better.

So, yeah, I think the pride is one of the things that made a lot of people think: 'I'm not gonna move out of here, I'm gonna come back, you know, I love my island. This is my piece of land, that no one's gonna get me out of here'

... I've seen so many signs everywhere *Puerto Rico se levanta*. we're coming back! Just to keep their motivation up again.

Let's keep working hard, you know?"

Fernando Lopez, 49, New York City- USA

"The spirit in the aftermath of the hurricane was, unexpectedly positive..."

You know, fiction prepares you for the worst case scenarios when disaster strikes: for violence and division and isolation- and everyone's out for themselves. And maybe it was just, luck or privilege that... I didn't see any of that, really.

Uhm but I prefer to believe that it was- that the Puerto Rican sense of unity was not entirely washed away.

... It took a disaster to bring us together"

Pablo, 21, Caguas- Puerto Rico

"Puerto Ricans like to help each other..."

And we lived that during the hurricane and the emergency.

... It was impressive"

Guillermo Martinez, 42, Caguas- Puerto Rico

"Pablo: I feel like, actually, Puerto Rico has a very strong sense of identity..."

Augusto: Yeah, and I love showing that off... Bad Bunny released a new album, right? I love blasting that- because, I don't care if I'm annoying- I want you to take my culture...

Pablo: You're spreading your culture

Augusto [laughing]: Like eat this culture, I'm Puerto Rican and I'm loud, alright? Accept it.

It's sort of a violent response to the hostility and racism, you know what I'm saying? It's a revenge.

Pablo: A backlash

Augusto: It's like if I don't fit in, then fine, I'm not gonna fit in-- anyone!
[Chuckling] I'll make you all hate me

Pablo: And I'll be ME!

Augusto: Exactly, your identity either disappears or doubles down

Pablo: Yeah, I'd say that was accurate..."

Pablo & Augusto, 21 & 19, Caguas- Puerto Rico

The Dungeon Master

Narrative excerpts on finding strength and resilience
to building a new normal



"Art in general, any form of art has the power to heal wounds. I feel like, if magic were real, it would be art..."

After the hurricane, people found their strengths in their creativity...

My oldest nephew, he knew how to play Dungeons & Dragons- none of us had ever played it and he explained: 'Well, it's a story- I tell you a story and you react to it' and I was like: ok, sounds fun...

And, and these are things that... that are very out of the box, you know, and in my case- playing with my nephews and this whole Dungeons & Dragons and fantasy scenarios and all that, I was studying at the moment and I was introduced to this whole new world of storytelling, and I've always loved stories- and I've always loved books and... and fantasy literature and all that, and I started thinking: Wow, this is powerful stuff.

And you know, even now I still play with my friends and I've actually made new friends who also played Dungeons & Dragons...

We've, we've gathered strength from wherever we can find it. We've reinvented ourselves, we've adapted and we keep moving on, because there really isn't a lot else that we can do...

... and then, for that particular group of friends I was the Dungeons Master so I was the one telling the story, so for them I'm like God, you know, and it's like, oh my God- the Dungeon Master's birthday- you know, this is, this is

a huge event [chuckles] and in that moment I realized life didn't go back to normal, I created a new normal. This is normal, now. This is my new normal.

...life will never be what it was, but that doesn't mean it has to be bad

... because the same way that, when I would be playing with my nephews and nieces and we would create this fantasy world where instead of being victims of a natural disaster, we're heroes, and we're powerful warriors, wizards and, we're saving kingdoms and destroying creatures and fighting dragons and flying around in a broom- and all these fantastical and magical things that are simply a result of theater of the mind, there's power to be had in imagination, there's power to be had in storytelling because I always- and this is something I always tell people that I play with: even if the scenario in which we're playing isn't real, even if the world doesn't exist, even if the fireball you just threw from your wand is a figment of your imagination, the emotion that you felt in that moment you slayed the dragon, or you saved the princess or you revived your fallen ally, that emotion is real and that is something no one can take away from you.

... there is strength to be had in the emotions that art can create.

You just gotta get up, keep trying till you create your new normal."

José E. Vázquez Moreno (Kiko), 29, Caguas- Puerto Rico

"I mean, people on the island, they're very resilient..."

And I think people were good at creating these sort of, uhm, informal ways of helping one another; informal community assistance, in order to make it through.

And, they quickly understood that this -at least for the near future- was the new normal, so to speak.

And my friend would say: "You know, you get used to it. You wake up in the morning, and you light up a gas stove - you know, if you have gas, you're lucky- and you eat yourself a breakfast and then you wash with the amount of water you have. And then, you go out and you go to the gas station, and you wait a few hours in line to get whatever amount of gas is available, and then you go to where the water is, and then you figure out how to get the water,..."

And then, you check on the people in your community who need help and see what they need"

... And I feel like that was basically what people did, is they sort of put together whatever they could with what they had at hand and understood that; how to get into new routines.

Regardless of what the new circumstances are"

Aníbal Arocho, 36, New York City- USA

Practical Modules

Step-by-step activities around the themes of:

ME

The world around **ME**

MY new normal

ME

Who am I?

What do I need?

What do I do now?

The world around **ME**

What is out there?

MY world of support?

Who/ What can I reach out to?

MY new normal

Why?

How?

Let's do this!

Manual Users: The manual is designed to address users directly, however, it can also be used by educators and facilitators with groups.

Module Activities: They are designed to build on each other, and therefore should be implemented in order of their numbering. Read through the steps for each number before implementing them. The activities can be done individually or in a group. If in a group, the “Do” sections should be done individually. Group sharing and discussions are useful for the “Reflect” and “Generalize” stages.

Learning Styles: Individuals have different learning styles and even though most of the activities here call for “writing” or “drawing”, feel free to use any other medium that is more convenient to you.

Material: Four large pieces of paper (A3 size or flip chart size), normal sized paper, pens/ pencils and colors. If you want, you can also use a printed picture of yourself and use tape/ glue to stick it.

Space Needs: Each activity module is long and reflective, you’ll need a space that is relatively quiet and private and that you’re comfortable sitting in for a while.

Sparks: You can play music in the background, to help you reflect better.

Time: Take as much time as you need. Minimum estimated time for each activity module is 1.5 hours. You might want to do each module on a separate day to allow time for reflection and thinking.



ME

Module Output:

- Elements of identity diagram
- Action plan of daily activities

Inspired By:

- [Peace Education Handbook](#)
- [An Overview of The Schwartz Theory of Basic Values](#)

We start with **ME**- the self.

**Who am I?
What do I need?
What do I do now?**

Objective: Understanding and identifying what makes “ME” who I am and my elements of identity. Which values are important to me? What is my passion? What are my needs? What drives me every day? And what can I do now?

Our set of learning indicators are:

Attitudes

- The willingness to be open and honest with oneself
- The willingness to question one's motives and drives

Skills

- Being able to put one's emotions and thoughts into words
- Being able to think through one's emotions and thoughts and reflect on them

Knowledge

- Understanding one's own set of values and principles
- Understanding one's needs, opportunities and fears



Do

1. On one A3 sized piece of paper, in the center :

- Write your name
- Draw yourself or stick a picture of yourself, if you'd like

This should not take up the whole page, it should be around the size of your palm.

2. Think of what makes you unique or different. What sets you apart from others?

What are your elements of identity?

Think of a minimum of 7 elements or more.

For example: For you, what do you feel usually stands out when you think of yourself?

Your identity elements may include:

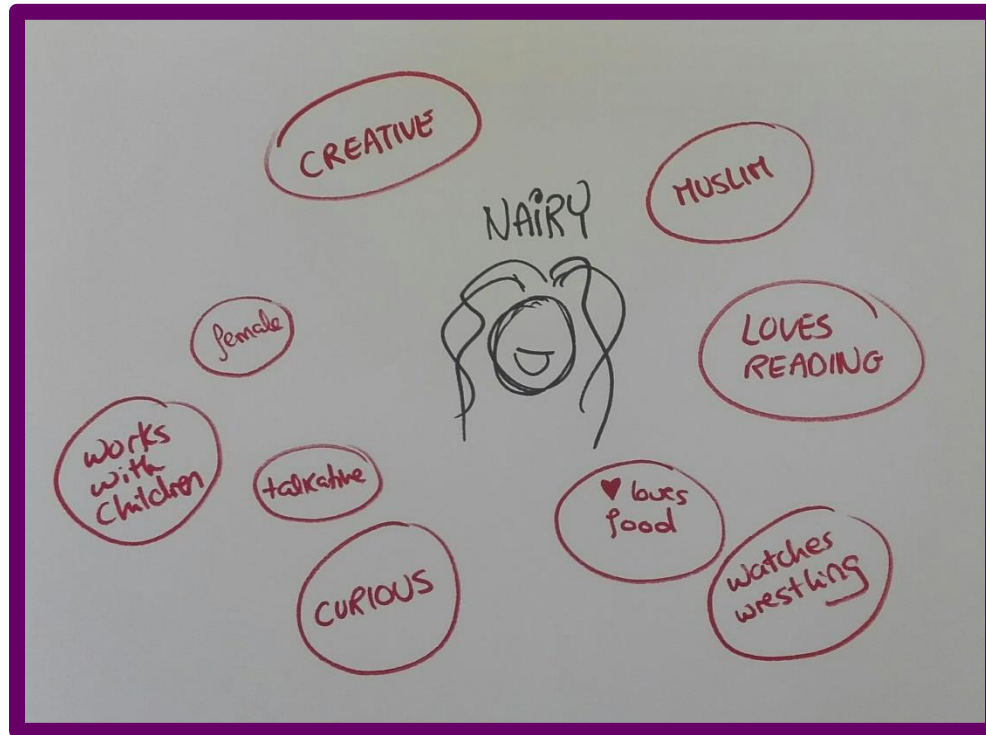
- Your gender, age, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, profession, etc.
- A personality trait: creative, curious, ambitious, etc.
- A hobby or passion: playing sports, painting, reading, etc.
- Skills or knowledge that you have.

3. Start writing down all these different elements around your image.

Write down each element in a circle.

Create bigger circles for the elements you feel are central to making you who you are, and smaller circles for the elements you don't necessarily prioritize.

For example: For me, religion is very important, so I would draw a big circle and write 'Muslim' in it. I am also a female, but I don't think of gender in my daily life so I would draw a small circle and write in it 'female'.



4. Now, think of values that define you and are important to you. Think of a minimum of 3 values or more. If you have already included your values in the previous step, then skip this step to step 6.

Sparks: You can look into [The Schwartz Theory of Basic Values](#) to help you brainstorm universal value elements.

5. As with identity elements, place the more central ones to you in bigger circles and the others in smaller circles.

Reflect

6. Look back at your piece of paper and at your identity circles. Try to answer the following questions.
7. How did this activity make you feel? Have you done this before?

For example: It could make you feel confused, reflective, surprised, etc.

Why do you think you felt that way?

Sparks: You can choose to write your answers down or record your voice for a later reference. You can also just reflect on it, in your mind.

8. Was it easy/ hard to break down your identity into different elements? Why?
9. Are there any identity elements that surprise you?

Sparks: It could be helpful to share this with someone who knows you well, and to think together what other identity elements and values he/ she thinks of, in relation to you.
Also, feel free to modify and add questions based on the discussion, space and your answers.

10. How did you prioritize your identity elements?
Why do you think the bigger identity elements define you better? What makes them stand out?

Generalize

11. When do you use these identity elements? When are they highlighted?
12. Do these identity elements shift or change based on the situations you're in, or people you're with? Are there situations when your smaller identity elements become bigger and vice versa? For instance, when you're with your family or with your friends?

For example: My nationality circle becomes more prominent when I travel abroad, because I continuously need to explain my background and culture. However, in my daily life in my home country, my nationality would not be a highlighted element of my identity.

13. Do you share some of your identity elements with anyone you know? Who is it? And how do you realize you share this identity element?

Is it important for you to have some identity elements that distinguish you from others? Why? /Why not?

Sparks: Think of similarities or differences between the members of your family, friends and colleagues.

Do

14. Think about your needs. What do you need to be happy?

From your previous reflection on your identity and what makes you “you”, think of what would make you happy and what you would need for that to happen.

For example: If your identity elements are geared towards arts and creativity, then your needs could be: needing a larger workspace, financial support for your art work, general support from your family, etc.

Sparks: Your identity could encompass more than one layer, and you’re encouraged to explore all of them, and think of their associated needs.

You can also think of it as a ‘love letter’ to yourself, what would you advise yourself to do to be happy?

15. Take a separate piece of paper and start writing down your needs.

16. Then, think of your fears, and write them down.

For example: My fear could be that I don’t trust my talent as an artist, or that I still need to develop my skills.

Sparks: Think of what is heavy on your body. What is it that weighs you down?

17. Then, use another paper to write down your opportunities.

For example: My identity elements are geared towards art, one of my opportunities could be that I already work in an art gallery, or that my family is supportive of my art.

Or I could be in an abusive relationship, my opportunity is that I'm aware that it's abusive and I can think of alternatives to get out of it but my fear is that I don't want to be alone.

18. On another piece of paper, start writing down what works for you now.
What motivates you? What are you actually happy about now?

For example: I am cooking my own food, or I'm studying something I like, etc.

19. Look at your written needs, fears, opportunities and what makes you happy.

Reflect

20. Can you distinguish between your attainable and unattainable needs?
What is the difference between them?
Do you know your opportunities?
Are your fears logical? Can they be addressed?

Sparks: Try to create a space for yourself to become conscious of what's bothering you. Try to acknowledge and bring to consciousness the opportunities that might be out there for you.

21. Is there a pattern about what makes you happy?

For example: Most of what makes you happy centers around food, or family, or shopping, etc.

Sparks: Happiness can mean different things. Explore your meaning of happiness. Is it satisfaction? Contentment? Or something else?

22. Could others share similar needs, opportunities and/ or fears?
If yes, who are they? And why do they share them?
If not, why not? What makes you different?

Generalize

Apply

23. On a new piece of paper, create a list of your day to day activities.

For example: Think of “A day in the life of you”. It could be a list of actions: I wake up at 7am, eat breakfast at 8am, etc. It could also be a short story, or a drawing. Choose the medium that you’d be most comfortable with. This could also include your goals that you have been working towards lately.

24. Bring together all the papers you’ve worked on so far, and reflect on them in relation to your daily actions, modifying them as needed. (Use table for support).

25. In this module, we have been answering questions, addressing:

- Our own elements of identity
- Our values
- Our needs
- Our fears
- Our opportunities
- What motivates us and makes us happy

Try to spend some time taking all this in, absorbing it and processing it.

Sparks: You can look at your modified list of daily activities as an action plan that can help guide you in the coming days to make conscious choices of how you spend your time and your day.

Elements of Identity and Values	Needs and Fears	Opportunities	What makes you happy and keeps you motivated?
<p>Take a look at your first paper with identity elements, then look at your daily actions and try to highlight what it is you do each day that reflects parts of your identity.</p> <p><u>For example:</u> Praying if you're religious, or painting if you're artistic, etc.</p> <p>Can you include more actions in your day that would help you enjoy your elements of identity?</p> <p><u>For example:</u> Schedule a regular call with a friend, or taking a walk outside, etc.</p>	<p>Similarly, thinking of your needs. Can you identify actions in your day that might/ could satisfy a part of your needs?</p> <p>Can you add new actions that would?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Do your fears affect your daily actions? Do they influence you on a day-to-day basis?</p>	<p>Are you doing all you can to make use of your opportunities?</p>	<p>Are you doing something that makes you happy every day?</p> <p>Can you do more?</p>

Look back at the ASK in the beginning of this module, do you think these indicators have been achieved? Do you have more indicators to add to them?

The world around ME

Module Output:

- Community mapping diagram
- Networks of support diagram

Here, we focus on THE WORLD surrounding **ME**- the context.

**What is out there?
MY world of support
Who/ what can I reach out to?**

Objective: Making sense of the “ME” in relation to what is out there.

How are other people similar/ different? What is my support system? How can I function/ interact within the world I’m in? How do I apply everything I’ve learned about “ME” in the outer world?

Our set of learning indicators are:

Attitudes

- The willingness to think critically of one’s surrounding environment
- The willingness to challenge one’s opinion of others

Skills

- Being able to map one’s own networks of support
- Being able to identify differences between individuals based on their identities and values

Knowledge

- Understanding how others view the world differently
- Understanding one’s own relation to the surrounding world

Do

1. Use two A3 sized papers to map out the community you live in. Use one paper to map the things or institutions you like in your community and another one for the ones you dislike.

This mapping doesn't have to be an actual map with streets and directions, it is, rather, a layout of what you like and dislike in your community. This could be by drawing and/ or writing.

For example: For the ones you like, it could be: the park, the house you live in, your bedroom, the restaurant around the corner, a club you go to, a place where you play sports, a place where you volunteer, etc. What you dislike could be: your neighbor's rundown garden, the deserted building down the street, etc.

Sparks: This is the first layer of the activity, the layer of structures.

Try to think of the spaces and places around you. Which places make you feel good? Which are your favorite? Which do you dislike or avoid?

2. Look at your mapping and start thinking of the people associated with these spaces. Add their names and roles.

For example: The teacher at the school, or the guard at the community center, etc.

Sparks: This is the second layer of the activity, the layer of individuals.
Try to think of the people within these spaces, who are they? And what do they do?

Reflect

3. How do you feel about this activity?
Was it easy or hard to map out your community institutions and individuals?
Why?
4. Have these institutions or individuals influenced your life in any way?
If yes, how?
If not, who else has influenced you? And where are they now?

Generalize

5. How do you think others would map out your community?
Would it be similar to yours? Why/ Why not?
6. Do you feel others were influenced by the same individuals you identified?
Why/ Why not?
What is your influence?

Apply

7. Bring back your paper of identity elements from the previous module.
Place it between the two papers of your community mapping.
8. Look again over your elements of identity, and start highlighting individuals in your community mapping who align with some of your identity elements.
9. Try to connect them together, tracing lines between them.

Sparks: You can start thinking of this as your network of support, that you can go back to whenever you feel you need guidance or support from someone.

10. Who else can be included in your network of support? Add them.

For example: Your family, friends, etc.

Sparks: Think in a general sense of everyone who gives you strength and support. Individuals who influence our lives but we don't necessarily consciously acknowledge them.

11. Take some time to look at the entities and individuals in the mapping of the parts you "dislike" about your community.

12. What makes them different?

What do you think are the elements of their identity?

How could they be viewing you, based on your identity elements?

How could you support those who are different from you?

13. What could possibly transform them to become a part of a support network for you? A part of the community that you "like"?

Is this even possible? Can it be under your control or influence?

For example: My neighbor's rundown garden is something I dislike in my neighborhood. An individual associated with this is my neighbor. From my interactions with him, I understand that he values his free time and sleep more than gardening. What can I do to reach out to him?

How can I use his interests as a common ground to start a conversation?

Maybe I could invite him over for lunch, and discuss potential volunteers who can help with his garden, etc.

14. Look at your network of support. Does it align with your needs from the previous module? Could your needs be satisfied and/ or supported through this network?
If yes, reflect on their roles in supporting you.
If not, who else do you need to reach out to, to help?

Sparks: You are now trying to make sense of your place within your community, and the sources of strength and support that might exist around you.

It is important to remember that conditions change and values shift. You might want to do this activity again at a later stage (whenever you question things) to touch base, and see what has changed within yourself and the community around you.

Look back at the ASK in the beginning of this module, do you think these indicators have been achieved? Do you have more indicators to add to them?



MY new normal

Module Output:

- *Community action plan*

MY new normal- my new adapted routine.

**Why?
How?
Let's do this!**

Objective: Identify what I look forward to in my daily life.

How can I create a daily routine? How do I stay motivated? How do I stay on track? How do I identify my new normal?

Our set of learning indicators are:

Attitudes

- The willingness to try something new
- The willingness to embrace one's own feelings of positivity, negativity, etc.

Skills

- Being proactive
- Being able to develop an action plan

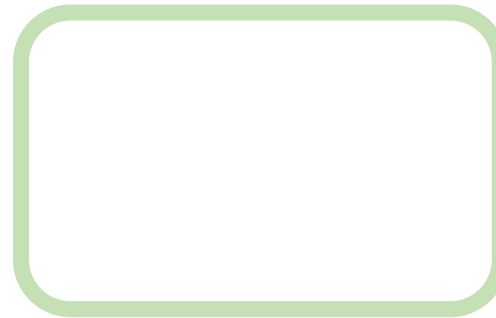
Knowledge

- Understanding one's passion and motivation
- Understanding and identifying one's new normal

Do

1. Follow the below diagram, and write your answers accordingly.

What is your biggest passion?
Think of what inspires you.



Are you doing it now?

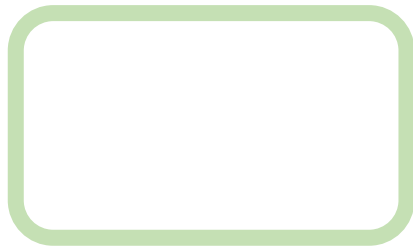


YES

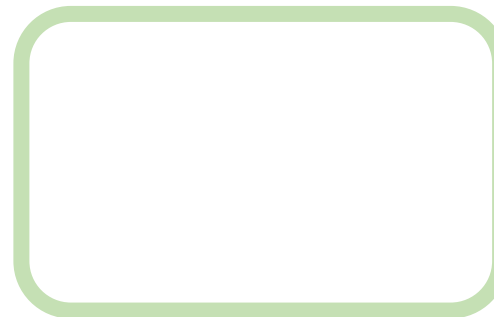
NO



How much time do you
spend on it per day?

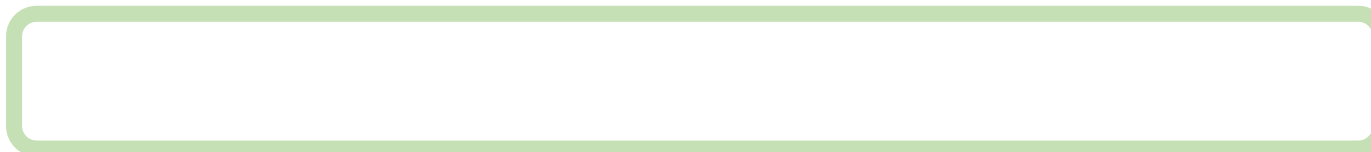


How can you incorporate it in
your day to day activities?



Why not?

What do you need to do it?



Reflect

2. How do you feel about this activity?
Was it easy to recognize your biggest passion?
Why? / Why not?
3. Was your biggest passion already included in your day to day activities from the previous model?
Why? / Why not?
What do you think this means?

Sparks: In many instances when stable conditions change, problem-solving can be addressed through creativity.

Do

4. On an A3 sized paper, write your passion at the center, it shouldn't take up the whole page.
5. Then, around your passion, start writing activities and actions related to it.

For example: If your passion is painting, you can write: buy art material, go to art studio, paint new objects, etc.

Reflect

6. Look back at your daily action plan, community mapping and your support network from the previous modules.
How is your passion translated in them?
7. Think how your passion could help you grow.
Why does it inspire you? And how?

Generalize

8. Think how your passion could help your community grow.
What's the effect on the larger community?

For example: If my passion is music, I can think how music in the park makes people happy, or how I could give music lessons to spread the love of music, etc.

Apply

9. Revisit your daily action plan from the first module.
How can you develop it?

You're now creating your own community action plan. Thinking beyond the personal, to adding activities in your daily plan that relate to your passion and could inspire your community.

Sparks: Following up on your networks of support from the community around you, it's now the step of thinking how to give back, and make an addition to the community.

10. Try to cover these questions in your plan:
Why is my passion useful?
What have I learned from it?
How can I use it to help my community?
11. Write down the entities and/ or individuals you would need to reach out to, to start contributing to your community.
If you don't know any, go out, search, ask around, etc.

12. For each day, add one action that answers each of these questions:

- What would make you proud today?
- What would make you happy?
- What would you be thankful for?

13. Start working on spreading your passion!

Sparks: This is an activity where you build something for you based on what you've recognized so far about yourself and your needs, from the previous activities. You're trying to create your own space and your own 'new' routine within the community around you. A community where you have identified your network of support.

These activities aim at having you become more intentional about how you feel. Following your passion helps you find something you enjoy and gives you the strength to retain this feeling of 'power' and 'empowerment'. Once these emotions stay with you, they help you remain inspired and motivated.

Look back at the ASK in the beginning of this module, do you think these indicators have been achieved? Do you have more indicators to add to them?

Oral History: My Approach



I think of my approach to oral history as a fluid and flexible collaboration between the narrator and the interviewer. It is an adventure: a journey -where the narrator is the guide- into an unknown act of remembering, bringing about new memories of territory and context. I try to accompany the narrator through this journey. Together, we try and make shape and meaning of the experience.

In designing my oral history research in Puerto Rico, I identified Hurricane María as the central event for my interviews. Therefore my research timeline covered:

- Pre- Hurricane Life
- Hurricane María Experience
- The Aftermath: Post- Hurricane

Through the different interviews and discussions I had with my narrators, we covered the following themes:

- The narrators' own backgrounds and lives in Puerto Rico
- Hurricane Irma & María experiences and the preparation beforehand
- The Aftermath: beyond the happening
- Reflections and thoughts about provided aid and support
- The decision to stay or leave Puerto Rico
- Reflections on current situation and hopes for the future
- Art expression and/ or taking refuge in arts and music

During the interviews, I took a lot of field notes, and in trying to trace the narrators' different responses and reactions to the hurricane, I identified various immediate and gradual responses. The immediate responses addressed basic survival needs: finding food, water, shelter and attending to medical needs.

The gradual responses reflected my narrators' different coping mechanisms, primarily the search for strength and resilience in building a new normal. Their responses varied widely depending on their identities, beliefs and value systems. It was clear through their narratives that after experiencing such a traumatic event with so much physical and emotional loss, one had to resort back to basic values to help make meaning of life.

Family, friends and general community support were often mentioned, in addition to faith and religion.

This led me to think that if I were to design activities to help in the search for strength, they would have to address three key themes:

- Identity: Who am I? And what are my values?
- Support Systems: What are my support systems? And how do I approach them?
- Action Planning: How do I build a new routine? And how do I stay motivated?

I started putting together the narrative modules, including excerpts of interviews addressing the previous three themes:

- Is Jesus **Puerto Rican**? Centering on shared stories of Puerto Rican pride, identity and sense of unity.
- The **Dungeon Master**: Centering on finding strength and resilience to building a new normal.

I had previously designed educational activities for volunteers and exchange students on “identity” and “understanding oneself” in the aims of helping them make conscious decisions about how they identify themselves before they experience a new culture. Being on an exchange in Costa Rica, helped me become aware of the importance of understanding our identity and how it evolves and transforms over time. I started going through these activities for inspiration, and started building up the first practical module “**ME**”.

For the “The world around **ME**” module, I relied on some of my previous work with children and youth on community mapping and identifying available resources for use to help address pressing societal needs. I used the mapping activity for this manual in addition to new activities that would help participants identify entities and individuals they can reach out to, for help and support.

“**My** new normal” was designed as a practical tool for action planning to build a new routine.

It is important to acknowledge that this isn’t the only narrative in Puerto Rico. Several of my narrators are at varying levels of coping and adjustment. There’s still shared grief, anger and frustration and not everyone has been able to build a “new normal”.

I therefore view my work as an attempt to create a more hands-on practical translation of one part of the shared narrative on strength and resilience.

