One generation plants the trees under whose shade future generations rest.
~Chinese Proverb
Sages of the Ages: Stories that touch and teach

Learner’s Materials

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Logo design by Annette Dow

Funded in part by a Maryland Cooperative Extension special programs grant.

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Introduction and Goals

Throughout the life of individuals and families, there are tough times and tender times, times that try us and times that teach us. Getting through these times and coming out stable and strong is the key to enduring and thriving.

As older adults look back on their lives, with the benefit of the passage of time for perspective, they can recall many stories of such times. Embedded in those stories are lessons on life which can be shared with others—youths filled with energy and a seemingly unending future—adults filled with experience and a future coming to an end. These youths and adults can learn from each other and in so doing strengthen their individual lives and the life of society in general.

Gathering and sharing those stories is the intent of Sages of the Ages: Stories that Touch and Teach, a collaborative project of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Family Life Committee and the Maryland Family Community Education organization. Themes for the stories in Sages of the Ages are based on resiliency research, which tells us that individuals and families can develop protective and recovery factors that get them through the challenges of life.

The program helps teach young people about life’s storms and rainbows through storytelling. A sample of stories from adults has been gathered and compiled into an interactive story collection. This activity guidebook gives you some of the materials you will need for the program. Along the way, you will experience hands-on activities and projects of your own design, develop skills and knowledge you can use to grow personally and connect to your communities.

The goals of Sages of the Ages are

- To build resilience capacity through intergenerational storytelling
- To foster the development of important life skills
- To encourage community involvement and help teens make a difference in the lives of other people
- To promote interaction between teens and older adults
Developing Life Skills among Teens

Materials regarding the seven priority Maryland 4-H life skills will be inserted here.

Decision Making

Acquiring Knowledge

Taking Personal Responsibility

Creative Thinking

Communicating

Understanding Self

Getting Along with Others
Storytelling Activity

With a group of your peers, discuss how you deal with difficult times. Address how a personal challenge differs from a community challenge. Address the ways in which you bounce back from challenges and the ways in which you help others bounce back. Discuss how being a teenager helps or hinders your ability to deal with certain challenges.

You can learn about resilience vicariously through the resilient stories of others. Learning lessons of resiliency through storytelling is the initiative of the Sages of the Ages program.

About the Activity
This activity points out many ways that we cope with difficulties and challenges. It also helps you discover and understand values that are thematic in our stories. By sharing stories with each other, we can learn from the ways that other people cope with their challenges. We can identify the common themes and values in our stories and think of creative ways to solve problems.

To provoke ideas about what common sources of stress are, how people cope, and what values our stories reveal, use an example from the list below.
  - Common sources of stress: School, family, peers, time management, relationship problems, worries about the future, failure to meet goals and expectations
  - How people cope: communicating and sharing with others about stresses, relying on close friends and family members, seeking help from a reliable source (tutors/teachers, professionals, community and social service organizations, etc.), taking steps to minimize or eliminate the stressor, resolving relationship problems, planning and organizing schedule, setting realistic goals
  - Values: importance of family and friends, freedom, self-worth, kindness, independence, achievement, upholding personal commitments, making moral decisions, honesty, compassion, economic sufficiency, respect for others, peace
**Storytelling Activity**

1. Share a brief story of a difficult or stressful situation, event, or time in your life. Address the ways you dealt with it, whether or not you were successful.

2. After everyone shares a story, identify factors that help people get through difficult situations or times. Use the ‘Finding Resiliency Factors in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 27) for examples of how people get through difficult situations.

3. Identify barriers to cope ability (e.g. what stresses and crises preclude the ability to cope). Use the ‘Finding Stressors and Crises in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 28) for examples of stresses and crises.

4. Identify values revealed in the stories. Use the ‘Finding Values in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 29) for examples of values.

5. Think about and discuss the following questions with your group:
   - What is the importance of stories and storytelling in our families, communities, cultures, and world?
   - What can we learn from stories?
   - How do stories change or enlighten our thinking about others and ourselves?
   - How is learning about ourselves and others beneficial?

**Discussion**

Discussing the activity can help you synthesize your ideas and the ideas of others with your experience and understanding of the activity.
The **Sages of the Ages** team has already collected some stories from older adults and compiled them in a website and print form that you can use. Each story is presented in an interactive form with an accompanying activity or storytelling suggestion. The pilot collection is another tool you can use to help identify and learn values, protective factors, stressors, and lessons of resiliency. It also serves as a sample of how you can present the stories you collect on your own in fun, interesting ways.

**About the Activity**
This activity involves using a collection of stories as a stimulus for thinking about the ways people cope with difficult times. Older adults, who have a lifetime of experiences and wisdom to share, tell all of the stories. By reading and hearing their stories, you can learn from the ways that other people cope with their challenges. You'll be able to identify the common themes and values in our stories and think of creative ways to solve problems.

**Discussion**
Like the last activity, you can discuss resiliency factors, stressors, and values in the stories with your peers.
Pilot Story Collection Activity

Explore the collection, either with your group or individually. If you choose to share the stories in a group setting, take turns sharing stories in the form in which they are presented. This may involve reading or acting out a story, leading and completing an activity associated with a story, or playing an audio recording of a story. You can do some of the storytelling activities during the group session, while other activities are suggestions for outside or future storytelling activities.

Storytelling comes in many forms, and people can record and retell stories in a variety of creative ways. This collection models the story collecting, compiling, presenting, and sharing you will do on their own in the next section of Sages of the Ages.

Just like before, you and your group can discuss the stories, finding the resiliency factors, the stresses, and the values in them.

1. Share a brief story of a difficult or stressful situation, event, or time in your life. Address the ways you dealt with it, whether or not you were successful.

2. After everyone shares a story, identify factors that help people get through difficult situations or times. Use the ‘Finding Resiliency Factors in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 27) for examples of how people get through difficult situations.

3. Identify barriers to cope ability (e.g. what stresses and crises preclude the ability to cope). Use the ‘Finding Stressors and Crises in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 28) for examples of stresses and crises.

4. Identify values revealed in the stories. Use the ‘Finding Values in Stories’ section of the guidebook (Page 29) for examples of values.

5. To elicit discussion about and reflection on the activity, ask the group the following questions:
   - How do the different formats in which people tell stories reach different audiences?
   - How can different storytelling techniques capture more about the storyteller than his or her words alone reveal?
Collecting Your Own Stories

About the Activity
This activity helps you learn about the lives of older adults you personally interview. You can choose your own methods of collecting stories, ask the questions you are most interested in, and form relationships with older adults whom you look up to and appreciate. Collecting your own stories helps you seek important lessons from older adults with whom you make contact. It also enables you to find the people and the stories that fit your interests and needs. Collecting stories is a hands-on opportunity for you to learn through your own experiences. Once stories are collected, you and your group will repeat the storytelling activity using the stories you collect to find lessons of resiliency (page 20).

Materials
Story prompt and consent forms
Tape recorder and tapes
Other recording materials

Use as many creative ways of collecting stories and as many sources as you can. Remember that you are looking for stories about overcoming challenges or tough times.

Discussion (after completion of activity)
1. How did collecting your own stories help you understand the experiences and lessons you heard about?
2. How can the interviews you conducted and the stories you collected help you in resolving some of your own challenges and difficulties?
3. How do you think the storytellers benefited from sharing their stories with you?

Special Instructions
Remember to use the enclosed prompt and consent form when collecting stories. Return the completed consent forms and a copy of every story collected to your leader.
Before collecting stories …

Because **Sages of the Ages** is a research-based program of the University of Maryland, there are a few important requirements and conditions for story collecting. These requirements are meant to protect the storytellers and their contributions to **Sages of the Ages**. You are only permitted to collect stories from adults age 18 or older. Every time you collect a story, you **must** have the storyteller read, complete, and sign the consent form that your leader will provide to you. You should give this form to your leader soon after you collect your story. You should also give a recording of the story, a transcript of the story, or a copy of the story to your leader. Your leader will be able to answer any additional questions you have about the requirements.

Finding storytellers

- Using a number of contacts and sources, finding available and willing storytellers is simple. You may contact a community organization of older adults, such as the Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, or a senior citizens club or activity group. Attending a meeting or activity of such an organization can help you recruit interested storytellers.
- You may consider contacting a senior center, an assisted living center, or a retirement community in search of storytellers.
- You can also find storytellers among your own family members, teachers, neighbors, and family friends.
  * Remember that sharing one’s stories is a personal decision: do not pressure older adults to share a story. All participation should be voluntary.

Getting ready

- Once you have located potential storytellers, you should set up a time and place to gather stories from volunteers.
- If you need special permission to enter a meeting or living space, make sure you seek that permission and plan a meeting time well in advance.
- Think about ways that you may want to record the stories and gather the necessary supplies (i.e., tape recorder, video camera, pen & pencil).

By collecting stories yourself, you can ask older adults to tell stories about certain struggles that you may have a particular interest in hearing. You should decide if you have any special interests or curiosities before collecting stories. These decisions may influence the topics you bring up in conversations, certain questions you ask, etc. However, it is important to let volunteers tell the stories they want to tell, rather than the stories you or others may want them to tell.
Being a good listener is an essential part of collecting stories from others. Because of the sensitive nature of some events and stories, you should expect emotional responses from storytellers. Be sure to:

- Maintain eye contact
- Be positive
- Be an active listener, check for understanding
- Ask open-ended, encouraging questions
- Allow the storyteller to talk freely without interruption
- Encourage conversation by asking ‘feeling’ questions
- Realize that there may be emotional pauses or tears in the conversation

When collecting stories …

In order to help you collect stories about resiliency, we have included an introductory letter about Sages of the Ages and a writing prompt to share with your storytellers. The introductory letter also contains the consent form, a section for the storyteller to give his or her contact information, demographic information, and signature indicating voluntary participation in the project. **Obtaining proper consent from each storyteller is mandatory.**

If you wish to use any photographs or artifacts from storytellers or similar items given to you by the storytellers, you must seek permission from them to include those items. The permission form to use or reproduce photographs, artifacts, or other items of or belonging to the storytellers is available from your leader.

The main purpose of collecting your own stories is for you, other teens, and older adults to benefit directly from the storytelling process. In this process, your sharing and engagement with older adults may form valuable and special relationships. You
will be able to experience the storytellers’ lives and lessons of resiliency from the source.

By spending some of your time collecting stories from older adults, you are sending the message that they are important and their stories and lessons are interesting and important to others. Moreover, adults who live alone may appreciate the chance to talk to and interact with others. Older adults often enjoy being nostalgic, reflecting on their lives, and sharing their stories with others.

When you record a story, ask the storyteller to recall a time in his or her life when resilience was a factor. If you have questions during the story collection, feel free to ask, but remember to be sensitive to the storyteller.

Recording each story using a different method will make for an interesting collection of stories. Think about the different methods you may use to record a story. Suggest some of these methods to your storytellers, but make sure that you let them choose the recording format with which they are comfortable.

After you have recorded a story, be sure to thank your storytellers individually. Consider sending a note or a card, making a special visit, giving storytellers a copy of their stories and/or a copy of the collection you make, or telling them about what you learned and how you will share their stories with others.

Once you have finished collecting stories, return one copy of each story collected and the accompanying signed consent forms to your leader. If you collected or took photos or artifacts, give copies and the accompanying permission forms to your group leader.
Personal Collection Storytelling Activity
Using your collection of stories and the stories collected by others in your group, repeat the activity from before. In addition to identifying resiliency factors in the stories you present and hear, share your knowledge of the storyteller with the group. Because you personally collected the stories you share, you may also want to discuss your interactions with the storytellers and share any photographs or artifacts you gathered.

1. After everyone shares a story, identify factors that help people get through difficult situations or times. Use the ‘Finding Resiliency Factors in Stories’ section of the guidebook (page 27) for help.

2. Identify barriers to ability to cope (e.g., what stresses and crises prevent us from coping?). Use the ‘Finding Stresses and Crises inStories’ section of the guidebook (page 28) for examples of stresses and crises.

3. Identify values revealed in stories. Use the ‘Finding Values in Stories’ section of the guidebook (page 29) for examples of values that you may find.

4. Think about and discuss the following questions to reflect on the activity:
   - How is finding lessons in the stories you collected yourself different from finding the lessons in stories that others collected previously?
   - How does meeting and conversing with the storytellers help you understand the stories differently?
   - How did the storytellers help you understand the lessons in their stories?
   - What was the experience of collecting your own stories like? How did interviewing older adults and hearing their stories help you?

The world changes when large numbers of people change in the way they think a little bit. ~Willis Harmon, Co-Founder, Institute of Noetic Sciences
Sharing Your Stories with Others

About this Activity
This activity helps you take your collections of stories, create your own ways of presenting the stories, and share them with others.

This activity intends to shift your focus from thinking about yourself to thinking about the experiences and resilience of others. Sharing the project and stories with the community allows you create their own projects from beginning to end, encourage community engagement, help others learn about getting through tough times, and develop interpersonal relationships.

Materials
Determined by the projects you choose

Discussion
Discuss the experience of sharing your story collection both with the storytellers and with others. Reflect on what you did, what meaning the experience has to you, how you applied what you learned to your life, how you shared your knowledge, and why the experience is important.

The ideas listed below are mere suggestions. Choose a format and project that is interesting, feasible, and appropriate for you. You can use the ideas listed to brainstorm any variation or any original project to compile the stories you collect. This activity provides many rewards for you, storytellers, and others with whom you share your story collections. A copy of the story collections will give you a special record of your work in Sages of the Ages and allow you to share with others.
Ideas for compiling your stories:

There are many fun and interesting ways to present your stories. You can take stories that are handwritten or typed and put them together into a book, a newspaper article or report, an historical timeline, a journal, poems, or letters. You can use photographs and other artifacts collected from storytellers to create a scrapbook or photo album. If you have audio or visual recordings of stories or storytellers, consider making a documentary, a quick film, a CD, or a tape.

For interactive ways to put your stories together, make a game, write a script, or create a teaching program based on the stories. Creative teens could make a picture book, write a play, write a song, or create a painting, mural, or sculpture.

Sometimes food and meals play a role in families and stories. If you are collecting stories from older adults in your family or several members of another family, an annotated cookbook is an interesting project. Collect family histories and stories about resiliency and difficult times and the family recipes that relate to those stories.

For a story collection with a larger scope (perhaps a joint effort among teens), consider creating a teaching program, a panel or interactive display, an informal talk, or a presentation.

What additional materials and information might you need to compile your stories?

While you are collecting stories, you may want to ask for certain information or ideas from your storyteller. If you have a way to present your stories in mind before you collect them, ask the storytellers for needed information or items as you go.

You may want to collect (borrow) and use photographs of the storytellers, photographs of items or people relating to the stories, or photographs of special occasions. Family and personal journals, books, recipes, letters, and scrapbooks may also compliment a story. Permission must be obtained from storytellers for any item collected or used.

To highlight the time period in which a story takes place, consider using newspaper clippings and articles from that time. Historic local, national, and world events can reveal a lot about the context of the stories. Use articles, cards, and other artifacts from relevant family events, like births, marriages, and deaths, to highlight the stories about those events.

A storyteller may think of an item or items that remind them of their story. You could collect personal mementos and keepsakes, such as clothing, jewelry, awards,
drawings, and other items relevant to the story themes and characters. Because of the personal value of many of these items, you may only be able to borrow, photograph, or replicate them.

Where and with whom can you share your story collection?

Depending on the format of your story compilation, you may think of several events, locations, and groups of people with whom to share your work. You may start by sharing with your youth group, 4-H club, class, a group of 4-H leaders or teachers, and other community organizations and leaders. 4-H, school, and other youth and community events may also provide an opportunity to display your work or give a talk or workshop about the stories you collected. Many youth and community organizations may provide a good opportunity for you to present your work in any way you choose. Community centers, schools, public libraries, senior and assisted living centers, local museums, and historical societies may offer some space for a display or an opportunity to otherwise share your story collection.

What is the value in making and sharing your own collection of stories?

Sharing your story collection with others can provide lessons of resiliency like those you found during the activities in Sages of the Ages. The lessons you learn can be passed on to those with whom you share your stories and experience.

Sharing what you create with your storytellers reinforces that their stories had value for everyone involved. It also allows older adults to feel that their life was meaningful and that they should look back and feel good about their life experiences.

Sharing or providing a copy of your compilation for storytellers is a nice way to thank them for their time and contribution. A copy of the compilation may also pass on family stories, memories, and lessons to other family members and friends. Your story collection provides storytellers with a keepsake of their life stories. For some adults in the final stage of their lives, remembering their past and the people in their lives can be difficult. Providing them with a pictorial or written collection of their stories may help them remember.

Note: If you plan to give copies of your story collection to storytellers and others, remember to consider a format that you can easily collect, copy or present, and reproduce. Don’t forget to give a copy of your compilation to your leader.
Discussing Stories as a Means of Coping

About the Activity
This activity poses key questions to help you apply the lessons in the stories to your own challenges. It may help you examine how you personally deal with difficulties.

You may find the influence of social, cultural, and other contextual factors on values and value formation interesting and thought-provoking. Remember to recognize the importance of making choices in accordance with your values.

Discussing Stories Activity
Read or listen to the collection of stories provided with this guidebook or the ones you collected. Examine them for the values that may have influenced the characters in the story. Consider these questions:

- What goals or purposes of the character can you identify?
- Are any desires or aspiration evident in the story? What values might they represent?
- Did you hear/read any expression of attitudes that might be an indicator of values? What attitudes do you think you uncovered?
- Can you find any interests among the characters? How might values tie in with those interests?
- What feelings (stated or implied) can you identify that might reflect underlying values?
• Do any of the characters or the storyteller state any beliefs or convictions? What might those say about values?

• How can the actions described in the story be indicators of values?

• Do your values match those you have assigned to the story characters? Why or why not?

• In what ways do understanding the values involved in the story help develop the ability to get through tough times?

• How do differing values lead to differing decisions and actions? How can differences in values cause problems for teens?

Know thyself.
~Greek philosopher
Finding Resiliency Factors in Stories

Resiliency research sheds light on factors that seem to play important roles in helping people gain, maintain and regain ability to handle life's tough times--its stresses and crises. The following list is provided to help you analyze stories for factors that help protect people from stressors and help people recover from crises. The list is not exhaustive. It is provided as a research-based guide for discussion.

Protective and Recovery Factors that Help Young People

- A Well Functioning Family
- Family Problem-solving
- Communication
- Parental Supervision and Vigilance
- Structured Parenting with Consistent Discipline
- Stable and Safe Home Environment
- Nurturing Relationships with Primary Caregivers
- Optimistic View of Youth's Future (From parents and significant others)
- Social Support (Positive relationships with relatives, friends, significant others)
- Celebrations (Acknowledgements of special occasions and events)
- Sound Financial Management
- Hardiness (Sense of control, commitment, and confidence in overcoming and enduring)
- Spirituality
- Time and Routines (Activities done with a degree of orderliness)
- Traditions (Important experiences that carry across generations)
- Flexibility (Ability to adapt to circumstances)
- Truthfulness
- Health (Physical and emotional well-being)
- Hope
Finding Stressors and Crises in Stories

Research identifies many of the events that cause life's challenges, both large and small—its stresses and crises. The following list is provided to help you analyze stories for factors that cause stressful and crisis situations for people. The list is not exhaustive. It is provided as a research-based guide for discussion.

**Stressors and Crises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressors and Crises</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of a spouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital separation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detention in jail or institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of a close family member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major personal injury or illness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being fired at work</td>
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<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
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<td>Retirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in health of family member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
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<td>Sexual difficulty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaining a new family member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major change in financial state</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of a close friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-law troubles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beginning or ending school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in living condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in personal habits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment or school difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in work hours or conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major change in recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making a large purchase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in sleeping habits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family gatherings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in eating habits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday observances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor law or traffic violations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence or abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with friends or peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding Values in Stories

Change is a fact of life. Change affects our lives, especially those changes that put us under stress or in crises. The more skilled we are at living with or directing change, the more likely we are to bounce back from change that can negatively impact the quality of our lives.

Clarifying values of others, and knowing what values we hold, can help us make decisions about the worth of the lessons we can get from stories. Understanding those values helps to shape our thoughts and actions.

If looked at closely, most stories reveal a great deal about the storyteller, the situation in which the story occurred, and especially about the values held by those involved. Understanding what people value is a means for better understanding ourselves, for knowing what is important to others and ourselves.

Values are the concepts of right, wrong, good, bad. They represent the qualities, situations, and things we prize and cherish. Values influence everything we say and do. Values are the product of our experiences; they can be clarified and acted upon.

Two people who studied values of people around the world found that people from various cultures commonly hold six values. These universal values are: economic adequacy (adequate housing, clothing, health care, and other life essentials), peacefulness (absence of war and strife), freedom (absence of coercion and confinement), and justice (equality, access to work, education, and health care).
Learning to be resilient, to bounce back from tough times is not just a skill teens need. It is a skill that society needs. As a nation, we have come through tough times. Older adults have stories to tell about getting through the Great Depression and World War Two. Middle-aged adults can tell about the effects of the Vietnam War, of the Social Rights era of the 1960’s, of the assassinations of leaders of that time. Older immigrants can tell about challenges in other countries that often lead to a move to the United States.

After the events of September 11, New York City, the Pentagon, and all associated with those events are struggling to make sense of the crises that occurred and trying to find ways to recover. In states like Maryland where tornadoes destroyed homes and businesses, or where winter storms close daily life, communities wrestle with the aftermath and search for ways to recover. In cities, small towns and rural areas where businesses are going bankrupt or closing down, workers and other businesses search for ways to keep the economy strong.

People tell stories as a means of recovery. Stories can also be told as a means of building resiliency. *Sages of the Ages* goes beyond storytelling between teens and adults. *Sages* can be a way teens can take leadership in building strong, resilient communities. Where communities are strong, where they care and support members, teens
and adults stand a better chance of handling tough times. When communities are strong, they can contribute to the ability of their communities, states, and nation to recover from events that not only make headlines, but are lived out with daily consequences.

One way communities become and remain strong is to revisit their past and present searching for difficulties that affected the communities. Then, communities can get together to talk and begin to envision desired futures. They can do so through telling stories and reflecting on the messages of those stories. Through reflective story telling, resiliency capacity can be built for both individuals and the community as a whole.

Young people can take the lead to get communities to tell stories of overcoming tough times. The telling of these stories can lead to questions about the future desired by members of the community. They can lead to ideas for preventing and recovering from tough times. They can lead to opportunities to help communities develop the capacity to bounce back from change—to be resilient well into the 21st Century.

You can watch for stories in your local media about people in the community overcoming tough times. These news stories can be collected and serve as a resilience teaching tool.
Intergenerational Activities and Projects

About the Activities
These activities are ideas and examples of community events, activities, and projects that bring young people and older people together. The activities may benefit a particular need of older adults or may be purely for socialization and fun. In this part of Sages of the Ages, you will learn to carry out an activity from its conception to its end.

Helpful Hints
There are many ideas for intergenerational activities, events, and service projects. If you and your peers are interested in pursuing one of the ideas in this activity, refine the idea to meet your interests, resources, and community needs. Determine the number of people who need to be involved for the scope that you are considering.

Think about your special talents and think of ways to use those talents in community activities and projects. You may consider serving as project/team leaders to help orient younger and new teens to their projects.

Note that you can alter many of these activities to accommodate ideas of any scope or size. Determine whether the activity should be a one-time event, a series of events, or a long-term project. Determine whether the activity should be planned and lead by an individual, by a group, or by a collaboration of agencies and organizations.

Take photographs and keep flyers and advertisements to document events.

First, decide what activities from which you would like to choose. Of those activities, discuss the resources and time necessary to plan and carry out the activity. Decide which activities carry the most benefit to everyone involved and are reasonable and cost-effective to carry out. Assign responsibilities, tasks, and deadlines. Carry out the activity from beginning to end, while seeking necessary guidance and resources from adults or leaders who can help you.
Intergenerational Activities

- Plan intergenerational storytelling events as a means of communicating individual or generational points of view, sharing and reflecting, encouraging discussion and interaction, and providing hope to younger generations. Meet to share stories occasionally at a local library, school, or community center.

- Taking part in a class or learning something new is rewarding and fun for older adults. Consider leading a class in arts and crafts, a language, exercise, music, gardening, photography, computer/internet skills, cooking, etc.

- Plan regular visits to nursing homes, home care agencies, and senior centers to visit with the residents and others. While you are there, lead a walking group, help to prepare and serve meals and snacks, play a game, and read to the visually impaired. These visits are also a good opportunity to seek the extra tutoring you may need in a certain subject or class.

- Plan to attend outside events such as concerts, festivals, book fairs, and plays with older adults.

- Share your special talent with others. This may help you refine your skills, teach others something new, and help an older adult refresh their talents.

- Go caroling around the holidays and bring small gifts or handmade cards, send valentines in February, and celebrate other holidays and occasions by making others feel remembered and special.

- Help older adults make cards, make gifts, and write letters to their friends and family members.

- Create a special day, week, or event honoring senior citizens, grandparents, veterans, or other group of older adults. Plan special activities or recognition in their honor to thank them for their contributions to your family, to the community, to the country, etc.

- Create a teaching program in which older adults teach young people a skill, etc. and young people teach older adults something comparable.

- Form a rap session with older adults to discuss current events and issues.

- Some older adults may need help with shopping or errands. Offer to escort them to their health care appointments, the bank, etc. or offer to deliver needed items or meals to homebound seniors.
Intergenerational Community Events

- Senior-Senior Prom: Teens and older adults plan an afternoon of dressing up, dancing, and dessert at the local community or assisted living center. Just invite the jazz band or combo from the local high school to play some popular swing and jazz tunes from long ago. Employ the involvement of a school or community organization to sponsor the event and guarantee participation.

- Intergenerational Block Party: Plan an outdoor gathering within a neighborhood. Get permission to block of the street. Invite people to bring food, arrange for music or other entertainment, decorations, games, activities, and storytelling.

- Holiday parties: Bring a small chorus from your school or youth group and some holiday cheer to a senior center or nursing home.

- Plan a cultural fair that involves teens, middle adults, and older adults. Invite everyone to share the food, clothing, celebrations, traditions, faiths, and artifacts that represent their culture.

- Form an intergenerational group of individuals to start a community theatre project, a music ensemble, or other recreational community groups.

Intergenerational Service Projects:

- Plan a collection or drive of the items that older adults in nursing homes need but do not have.

- Volunteer to do yard work for older neighbors and friends.

- Form a joint community initiative of intergenerational groups working to fulfill the needs of and improve the community in an agreed upon way.

- Start a joint service project with youth programs and adult programs (i.e. Scouts & AARP, retirement home & day care, etc.)

Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
~Margaret Meade, Anthropologist
Brainstorming Intergenerational Activities and Projects

About the Activities
Brainstorming your own activities and projects teaches you to target the needs of your community and be civically active and responsible. By generating your own ideas, you and your peers can take part in activities that are of most interest to you.

Helpful Hints
To brainstorm your own project, answer the questions below. It is important to consider a project’s relevance to your interests and your particular community.

Discussion
1. What is the usefulness of community activities and projects that promote resiliency?
2. How can communities help individuals cope with difficulties?
3. How do communities manage collective difficulties?

- What is the intergenerational and/or community problem, concern, issue, need, or void you hope to address?
- What are some of the ways it can be addressed? Weight the costs and benefits of each of these possibilities.
- What special skills, experiences, or interests do you have that you can use in a community project?
- What is the scope of the project:
  - A one-time event or activity?
  - A series of events or activities?
  - A long term project?
- What are the goals of your project?
- Who is your target audience?
- What other people or organizations will be involved? How many people will you need to make the project a success?
- Are there any materials or resources you will need? How will you gain access to them?
- How will you evaluate whether or not your project is successful?
Reflection and Evaluation

How would you rate **Sages of the Ages** overall? Circle your response.

1  poor  2  fair  3  good  4  very good  5  excellent

What were the best things or your favorite things about **Sages of the Ages**?

What were the worst things or your least favorite things about it?

How could this program be improved to be more beneficial to you?
References


Throughout the life of individuals and families, there are tough times and tender times, times that try us and times that teach us. Getting through these times and coming out stable and strong is the key to enduring and thriving.

As older adults look back on their lives, with the benefit of the passing of time for perspective, they can recall many stories of such times. Embedded in those stories are lessons on life which can be shared with others—youths filled with energy and a seemingly unending future—adults filled with experience and a future coming to an end. These youths and adults can learn from each other and in so doing strengthen their individual lives and the life of society in general.

Gathering and sharing those stories is the intent of Sages of the Ages, a collaborative project of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Family Life Committee (4-H and Family Consumer Sciences) and the Maryland Family Community Education organization. As the millennium dawns, we want to collect, compile and distribute those stories through oral, printed and electronic means. To do so, we need YOUR help.

Themes for these stories are based on resiliency research, which tells us that individuals and families can develop protective and recovery factors that get them through the challenges of life. Help us teach young people about life’s storms and rainbows through your story.

Tell us a story when you were tested, taught an important lesson, or successfully handled some of life’s challenges. Share your story so that your wisdom can help young people cope with their tough times today.

♥ Think back across your life span and remember times that young people may find inspirational, helpful, interesting, etc.
♥ Next, write your story using the attached form. A few prompters are included to help you tell the story.
♥ Finally, sign your story and consent form and send to Dr. Bonnie Braun at the address below for compilation and use with programming. Note: You may want to keep a copy for you and your family!

Send Copies of Stories to:
Bonnie Braun, Ph.D., Extension Family Life Specialist, University of Maryland, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, MD 20742 or BB157@umail.umd.edu or Fax: 301-341-9161.
Thinking back on my life (or recalling an appropriate story of someone else), I remember a time when …

**When?**

**Where?**

**Who were the key people?**

**What happened?**

**Why did this happen?**

**How was hope or resiliency involved?**

**What makes this story special to you?**

Continue on the back if more space is needed.

The key lesson to be learned from this story is . . .

Signed*: ___________________________ Date: _____________________

Address: _____________________________________________________

Phone:  ____________________________ Email:  ____________________

Check one:  ____FCE member ___4-H Volunteer ___4-H Member ___Other

___Below 50 ___50-59 ___60-69 ___70-79 ___80-89 ___90-100+

___Male       ___ Female
Appendix C

Sages of the Ages: Stories that Touch and Teach

I give permission to the Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, to use and publish my photograph for educational and promotional purposes without compensation.

Date: _______________________________________________________

Name: _________________________________________________________

Phone #: _______________________________________________________

Signature: _______________________________________________________
(If Minor, Signature of Parent or Guardian)

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