



Sources of Strength

Overview: This activity is a good for helping create safe space and affirming individual and collective strength.

Purpose: This activity can be used in many ways to connect participants to a sense of their resilience¹. The demands of activism are intense and sometimes isolating, and, in some contexts, the backlash and risks can be unnerving and frightening. It is always good to ground in our sources of strength and our sense of community to bolster ourselves.

Note: We recommend this as an opening activity for **DEALING WITH THREATS, RISKS, AND SAFETY** or as part of any process addressing risks and security, as it can help prepare participants to deal with sensitive and emotional material.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Colored cards
- Markers
- Flip charts
- Masking tape
- Space on wall for paper quilt

Credit: This is adapted from JASS Southern Africa and JASS Mesoamerica

¹ Resilience is basically about people's capacity to face and overcome adversity and unexpected challenges. This capacity can be individual, but it can also be collective. Collective resilience in the context of social struggles and the defense of human rights is about the way groups, organizations, movements and communities overcome adverse conditions to continue organizing and defending their rights. In our particular contexts, it usually has to do with facing risk, repression and violence towards activist leadership, movements, organizations and communities through collective protection, self and mutual care, and the strengthening of support networks and organizational capacities.





Process:

- Introduce activity.

In pairs:

- Start with an affirmation of people's individual power and strength – have participants think about what sources they draw on to give them courage, fortitude, perseverance, energy, joy, connection etc.
 - Have them share with partner some sources – for example, what makes you feel strong, capable, powerful, happy, inspired, courageous?
 - And then write 2 – 3 words or short phrases that reflect those sources on different colored cards. Some examples could be: “My friends”, “Dancing”, “My community”, “My organization”, “Contemplating nature”, etc.

In plenary:

- Have everyone share and place their cards in a designated space on wall, posting them close together in the shape of a multi-colored quilt.
- Ask for comments – what strikes you about this image and its contents? What does it say to you about our sources of power and strength?
- Summarize key and overlapping elements, acknowledging that given the nature of human rights work, these sources become key to our survival and health, pointing out those related to solidarity, ways we can be supportive of one another, etc. Using the quilt imagery, you could also say that these sources form some of the pieces of a protective quilt that we draw on to help keep us safe and strong.

Facilitator Note:

- *You might end by asking everyone to take a minute to think about and jot down -- what each person would like from the group that would help them feel strong, inspired and capable? At end of minute, ask everyone to share. Record and post.*
- *Keep the quilt up in the room as a reminder and symbol of people's individual and collective strength and power.*
- *This opening exercise provides an example of an inspiring/energizing activity that you can use to start each session with in order to balance the challenge of dealing with such difficult subjects.*