NPR Listening Party Kit:
America’s Opioid Epidemic

This month’s selection of stories seek to help us understand America’s Opioid Epidemic. Gather some friends and dig in.
A National Crisis...

Tough headlines can be hard to stomach – and even harder to digest when the stories behind the headlines are nuanced, complex and sometimes difficult to understand.

Such is the case with the opioid epidemic, which has spread through America’s homes and consciousness with a devastating impact. It’s affected Americans from all backgrounds and walks of life – from members of marginalized communities to legendary international icon, Prince. So how did we get here and where can we go from here? There are no easy answers, of course, which compelled us to focus on this topic.

This month, we partnered with NPR’s Kelly McEvers for two intimate Listening Parties in Atlanta and Chicago to listen to some powerful reporting from the frontlines of the epidemic and dig right in with our audience. Both evenings were powerful: intense, raw and full of empathetic curiosity. While each had its own unique course, the events were unified by an important idea - the conversation about addiction must continue if we hope to arrive at a place of understanding and find thoughtful ideas for moving forward. Thank you to our event sponsor, Cigna, for their support in bringing these events to life.

With this month’s kit, we invite you bring this important conversation into the hearts and minds of your community. Let’s try to make some sense of a national crisis and cultivate some empathy, together.
America’s Opioid Epidemic: 6 Stories

Our selection of stories this month includes “We Found Joy” - the story we featured at our events - and five additional stories to help you and your crew dig into the opioid epidemic.

Interview & Moderation Tips From Kelly McEvers

Addiction is a sensitive topic and this month’s stories explore serious ground. Kelly’s interview and moderation tips will help you set the tone for an impactful discussion with your friends and family.

Guide To Hosting A Listening Party

If you’re new to this, our guide materials help you bring your listening party to life.
The Stories: Six Pieces To Spark Your Conversation
What did you find interesting or surprising about Maia’s reporting and ideas? Had you considered the difference between addiction and physical dependence? Why do you think our culture has taken a ‘tough love’ approach to addiction?

Which character in the story did you respond to most strongly? Did you learn anything that surprised you? Did the reporting affect your perceptions of addiction?

Which part of Joy’s story struck you the most? How does her experience align with ideas you had previously about addiction? How does it challenge those ideas? Have you or someone you know struggled with addiction?

‘Unbroken Brain’ Explains Why ‘Tough’ Treatment Doesn’t Help Drug Addicts

Host: Terry Gross
Time: 36 min 22 sec

We Found Joy
Reporter: Kelly McEvers
Time: 28 min 28 sec

‘Unbroken Brain’ Explains Why ‘Tough’ Treatment Doesn’t Help Drug Addicts

Host: Terry Gross
Time: 36 min 22 sec

The House
Host: Kelly McEvers
Time: 34 min 42 sec

We Found Joy
Reporter: Kelly McEvers
Time: 28 min 28 sec

‘Unbroken Brain’ Explains Why ‘Tough’ Treatment Doesn’t Help Drug Addicts

Host: Terry Gross
Time: 36 min 22 sec
What did you find most interesting or surprising about this story? Were you aware of the connection between American's drug consumption and Mexico?

How Heroin Made Its Way From Rural Mexico To Small-Town America

Host: Renee Montange on Morning Edition
Time: 7 min 02 sec

What do you make of Britt’s story? Have you ever experienced the kind of pain she lives with? What do you think of the stigma around pain she describes? Had you considered the connection between opioid use and pain?

Patients Seek Out Alternatives To Opioids In Treatment Of Chronic Pain

Reporter: Naomi Gingold on All Things Considered
Time: 3 min 53 sec

Were you already familiar with how opioids affect the brain? What surprises you most about the science of addiction? Does this challenge any ideas you held previously about someone like Jack?

Anatomy Of Addiction: How Heroin And Opioids Hijack The Brain

Host: David Greene on Morning Edition
Time: 6 min 51 sec
5 TIPS ON HOW TO INTERVIEW LIKE A PRO
with Kelly McEvers

Award-winning journalist, Kelly McEvers, hosts NPR’s All Things Considered and Embedded. She shares tips for interviews, many of which apply to leading discussions.

1. Be honest. Tell the interviewee the purpose of the conversation. From “This will be heard by millions of people on the radio!” to “It’s just us — let’s come up with some solutions to these problems.”

2. Share something about yourself. One of my favorite interviewers is Mark Maron, who talks about his own personal life when he’s interviewing. Rather than a technique, it’s an honest exchange. I share, you share.

3. Sometimes the best question can be, “And then what happened?” If someone is telling a story, let them tell it!

4. Don’t freak out if there’s silence. People need time to think. Let a thought sit for a moment. Let a heavy moment be heavy. Let the conversation breathe.

5. This might sound crazy, but cry if you need to. If something a person is saying makes me cry, I don’t try to hide it. It’s not like they’re going to be mad at you for crying.
How to Host an #NPRLListeningParty
WHAT IS A LISTENING PARTY, ANYWAY?

Bring together friends for a fun, refreshing social experience that’s usually solitary: listening to radio stories.

At an NPR Listening Party, great audio storytelling gives you and your crew the chance to take a break from screens, listen together, and go deeper with thoughtful discussion and stories of your own.

It’s easy. All you have to do is:

• Pick a story
• Gather friends in a cozy place
• Hit airplane mode, listen and discuss!

Each month, our themed toolkit offers a section of stories curated to help spark discussion and includes conversation catalysts.

Show us how you #HostYourOwn #NPRListeningParty and together we can spread the mission of public radio for a more informed, engaged, and empathetic world.
HOW TO GET STARTED

1. **Pick a day and time.**
   
   Weekend brunch works great, as do weekday evenings. Consider other events happening in your community already and schedule around them so you don’t have to compete. We recommend carving out about 90 minutes for the whole event.

2. **Pick a venue.**
   
   We recommend hosting at your house to keep things cozy and casual. But if you have other ideas or access to an intimate space, go for it! Ideally, aim to keep the group no larger than 20 people so that everyone gets a chance to speak.
3 Send your invite.

You can use email, Facebook, or whatever you like. Please include the NPR Generation Listen logo or feel free to use our invite graphic. Have fun with it! A day or two before the Listening Party, send your guests a reminder to be on time and include any key information about arriving to / parking at your home, etc.

4 Choose a story or podcast.

Think about what will connect with the friends you’ve invited. You can choose one longer piece, or pair a couple of shorter segments. Generally aim for no longer than 45 minutes. Stories with a bit of tension or controversy make for a more lively discussion. Listen ahead of time and prepare some conversation starters to kick off your discussion. Also, consider which friends may have some interesting ideas to contribute based on subject matter expertise.
Prep the space.

Coziness is key. You want people to settle in – kind of like watching a movie. Put out lots of pillows and blankets. Keep the lighting soft. If possible, arrange seating into a circle, which will help conversation flow. It’s a good idea to have a focal point for folks to settle their gaze on (it may feel strange at first to not be looking at a screen). We also recommend setting out paper and pens so people can take notes and/or doodle while they listen.

Mind the details.

Identify the device you plan to play the story from ahead of time. Make sure it’s fully charged and notifications are off. You may consider downloading the piece if your Internet is spotty. Make sure your speakers are powerful enough for everyone to hear with no problems. Oh, and stock up on some light snacks and drinks for folks to munch on.
QUICK CHECKLIST

- Set date + time
- Send invite
- Pre-listen to story
- Jot down a few discussion-starting questions
- Create a cozy feel where you’re hosting:
  - Arrange seating in a circle if possible
  - Pillows, blankets, comfy chairs
  - Soft lighting
  - Pre-download story or make sure you have solid Internet connection

- Turn off notifications on streaming device
- Set out some notepads and pens / markers
- Stock up on light snacks & beverages
- Know the room: are there some subject matter experts you can pass the ball to during the discussion?
- Snap some pics for the socials
- Be creative! Make your Listening Party uniquely yours
#HostYourOwn

SEND AN INVITE
visit our website for more information

generationlisten.npr.org/listening-party

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