



SIMULATED ADHERENCE TREATMENT EXERCISE*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

 **Time:** 60 minutes

 **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define the importance of adhering to an HIV treatment plan;
- Review barriers to being adherent;
- Experience the challenges of another person's HIV treatment plan.

 **Training Methods:** Lecture, Brainstorm, Small Group Activity

 **In This Activity You Will...**

- Explain the role of a peer educator in helping peers to adhere to medications (15 minutes)
- Break into small groups to conduct a pill box activity and report back on the experience (30 minutes)
- Debrief the activity (15 minutes)

 **Materials:**

- Flip chart with adherence-related terms
- Flip chart with adherence issues
- Markers
- Sets of colored chips (five different colors)
- Medication cards (ComboCards may be ordered from www.combocards.com.)
- Pens
- Pill boxes
- Skittles® or M & Ms®

 **Preparation:** Prepare flip chart.

Instructions

1. Explain that one of the roles of a peer educator is to help peers become more adherent to their treatment plans (Steps 1 & 2: 15 minutes).
 - We now know that taking your HIV medications properly and taking every dose is crucial to keep your medications working properly and to avoid resistance to medications. One of your roles as a peer educator is to meet with people who are having trouble with adherence. Let's start by reviewing some terms from the skit in the previous exercise.
2. Show flip chart with the following terms and define as a group. **[Note: Ask group to define each term, one at a time, then add missing information from the list below.]**
 - **Adherence:** Adherence can mean doing your best to be faithful to a plan or agreement set by you and your HIV provider to take your medicine as prescribed, keep and make appointments, eat right, exercise and do what is necessary to feel your best. Basically adherence means sticking to whatever you and your provider decide to do for you to have the best health possible.
 - **Viral Load:** The term "viral load" refers to how much of the virus is present in your bloodstream. There are tests like the PCR that measure the amount of new HIV released into the bloodstream.
 - **Undetectable:** The best viral load test result is "undetectable." This doesn't mean there is no virus in your blood; it just means that there is not enough for the test to find and count.
 - **Resistance:** This term refers to HIV's sensitivity to a particular drug. Resistance is thought to result when the virus mutates or changes. In HIV, such mutations can change the structure of viral enzymes and proteins so that an antiviral drug can no longer bind with them as well as it used to, and as a result, the drug may not work for you any longer.

* This module comes from Duke University, Partners in Caring; Center for Creative Education, 2006.

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3. Explain the next activity (Steps 3 - 6: 10 Minutes).
 - *It's human nature to "know better than we do." In other words, we often know the right thing to do in a situation, but we choose an option that is not in our best interest. Based on the idea that we know better than we do, let's think about our motivations—what are some reasons we don't always make good decisions about keeping medical appointments, taking our medicine, practicing safer sex and using substances? [Allow a few responses.]*
 - *We're going to do an activity now where we'll ask you to put your own adherence experiences aside and explore how someone else might feel. In a moment, we'll get into groups where we'll be filling pill boxes for a simulated HIV treatment plan.*
4. Distribute colored chips and ask participants to form groups according to their colors. There should be five groups of three.
5. Provide instructions. Facilitators should be available to help each group as they get started.
 - *Each group will need to load their boxes for the week. The note taker should record the adherence issues:*
6. Give each group a pill box and a treatment card and ask them to identify a recorder.
7. Give groups 10 minutes to load their pill boxes and discuss the issues they noted. After 10 minutes, call them back and have each group present their medication. Each group should have two minutes to present.
8. Process by asking the following questions (15 minutes).
 - *What are some messages from this exercise?*
 - *What is the big picture?*

*How many times a day;
The number of pills;
Full or empty stomach;
Water issues;
Side effects.*

[Note: Provide adherence issues on a flip chart for reference.]

Summary

Thanks for your hard work. We are assuming that, by attending this training, you are serious about your drug regimen, and that you are as adherent as possible. If you have issues with the medications you have been prescribed by your doctor, you are either taking them, or you feel comfortable advocating for yourself to your health care provider. If you are taking a drug holiday without communicating with your provider, please talk to one of the staff here at this meeting. We will help you find a way to talk to your provider.

Although peer educators are not doctors, you can be active listeners and appreciate the issues involving adherence that each client has. You can also offer to help to communicate with providers regarding issues relating to their clients adherence.

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► TRAINING TIP

Things to stress:

Through these different exercises, each person can see how difficult it is to load pill boxes. You have to think through:

- Whether the medications need to be taken with food or without
- Whether the medications need to be taken more than once a day
- Whether there are likely to be difficult side effects such as nausea, headaches and diarrhea.

As peer educators, it is important to validate the difficulty of being adherent, while also being a cheerleader and advocate.

Wrap up with key points:

- Taking medications regularly and as prescribed by your doctor will keep viral load down and prevent drug resistance;
- Adherence is important for your health and the health of others;
- Adherence is a challenging process and it is important to understand these challenges.

* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from Duke University, Partners in Caring; Center for Creative Education, 2006.