

SEXUAL LIFE AFTER HIV DIAGNOSIS*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

🕒 **Time:** 35 minutes

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

- Discuss the emotional impact of HIV and sexual life;
- Understand information and skills for assisting those who are HIV positive to regain the sex lives that they enjoyed prior to diagnosis;
- Assist peers and their partners in remaining safe sexually, while relieving some of the anxiety, fear, and negative feelings that often interfere during intimate sexual relations.

✓ In This Activity You Will...

- Introduce the topic of sexual life after HIV diagnosis (5 minutes)
- Discuss the topic with group relating to their experiences (10 minutes)
- Do small group activity practicing how to talk to clients about sexual life (20 minutes)

(continued next page)

Instructions

1. Introduce the topic of sexual life after an HIV diagnosis .

A person's sexual life may be halted or changed by a positive HIV antibody test, or by the diagnosis of AIDS. Plans to marry, find a life partner or have children may change. These losses can be painful and intense, and feelings about them can be hard to share and difficult for others to grasp.

The stigma attached to HIV disease and AIDS, along with others' fears and misinformation about how a person can become infected or transmit HIV, only adds to the pain, isolation and worries of families. Some people choose secrecy with neighbors, friends, and even relatives, rather than risk rejection or discrimination. Other people choose to be open about their HIV status. Reactions can vary from understanding and overwhelming support to violent acts. These are difficult decisions and people may be isolated from others when they need them most.

2. Encourage the group to discuss some of their experiences and reactions about how HIV affects sexuality. [Note: trainer should encourage the group's experiences but be prepared to redirect people if participants get off track or the conversation goes on too long.]

What are some words you think of when you hear "sex after HIV"?
[Note: allow a few responses and write on flipchart, then move to the next question.]

Think back to when you first learned you were HIV positive. What are some of the thoughts or experiences you had regarding sex and intimacy?
[Answers may include the following:]

- Loss of libido
- Fear of infecting a partner
- Anxiety about disclosing status to a new potential sexual partner

Thank you for sharing such personal experiences. Now let's talk about how we can assist peers who are struggling with sexuality concerns.

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

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ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Materials:

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Method for breaking people into small groups (Topic cards)
- Cards – Sexual Life Topic Scenarios
- Trainer Notes – Sexual Life Topic Scenarios

Preparation:

- Prepare Sexual Life Topic Scenarios (should be printed, cut and laminated)
- Print/Cut topic cards

3. Give instructions for the activity.

In a moment, we'll get into three groups of five. Each group will need to develop some responses for talking to peers about sexual life after HIV. We've prepared three areas to address, condom use and abstinence; unsafe sex; and talking about sex. In your small groups, discuss your scenario and develop some responses and questions for your peer. After 10 minutes, we'll report back on our topics.

4. Break large group into three smaller groups. Distribute topics.
5. After 10 minutes, call groups back together and allow each group to share their issue and report on the responses they developed.

Summary

- After all groups are finished, acknowledge the difficult nature of discussing sexual life with peers and process with the following questions:

Talking about sex is difficult. Especially when it's someone you don't know very well.

How comfortable are people with discussing these issues with peers?

What are some of your success stories regarding good communication with sexual partners?

What other questions do you have about sexual life after HIV?



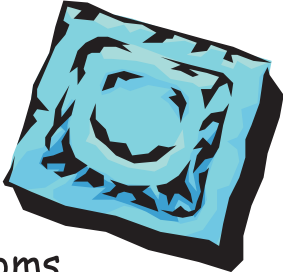



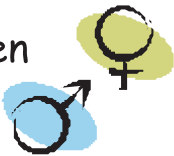
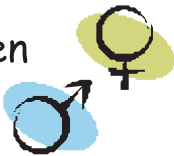
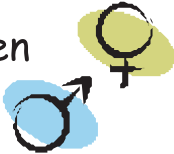
- It is important to understand the emotional factors associated with HIV and sexual life;
- Peer educators are an excellent resource for helping newly diagnosed HIV positive peers process their concerns about regaining their sex lives.

* 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.

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SESSION HANDOUT # 1 of 2

TOPIC CARDS

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>Condoms and Abstinence</p> |  <p>Condoms and Abstinence</p> |  <p>Condoms and Abstinence</p> |
| <p>Unsafe Sex</p>  | <p>Unsafe Sex</p>  | <p>Unsafe Sex</p>  |
| <p>Sex Talk: How & When</p>  | <p>Sex Talk: How & When</p>  | <p>Sex Talk: How & When</p>  |

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SESSION HANDOUT # 2 of 2

SEXUAL LIFE TOPIC SCENARIOS

Condoms and Abstinence

Your peer comes to you with questions about safer sex. As a group, come up with answers to the following questions posed by your peer.

- Is sex without condoms always unsafe?
- Does “unsafe” mean different things for HIV-negative and HIV-positive people?
- Should I just stop having sex?

Unsafe Sex

Your peer tells you that s/he has not been using condoms when having sex. As a group, come up with questions to discuss the circumstances involving unsafe sex.

Sex Talk: How and When?

Your peer comes to you with questions about how to talk to a new potential sex partner. As a group, help your peer develop strategies for talking to a new partner.

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SEXUAL LIFE TOPIC SCENARIOS

Condoms and Abstinence

Your peer comes to you with questions about safer sex. As a group, come up with answers to the following questions posed by your peer.

- Is sex without condoms always unsafe?
- Does “unsafe” mean different things for HIV-negative and HIV-positive people?
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Possible answers:

Why might you choose abstinence or not having sex?

Emphasize that this is an individual choice but people who have been sexually active shouldn't feel that they must be abstinent just because they are infected with HIV.

(They should choose abstinence because that's what they want.)

Unsafe Sex

Your peer tells you that s/he has not been using condoms when having sex. As a group, come up with questions to discuss the circumstances involving unsafe sex.

Possible answers:

What circumstances cause you to want unsafe sex?

When you have wanted to have unsafe sex and didn't, what stopped you?

Sex Talk: How and When?

Your peer comes to you with questions about how to talk to a new potential sex partner. As a group, help your peer develop strategies for talking to a new partner.

Possible answers:

What are some of your success stories regarding good communication with sexual partners?

What are your fears about discussing sex with your partner?

How can you practice talking about sex?