

Talking about HIV

Talking about HIV with a partner | Young Voices Africa

Video of Talking about HIV with a partner | Young Voices Africa

Lineo has something on her mind that she wants to tell her boyfriend, but she's afraid of losing him. Find out more about the choice she needs to make by watching the animation above. What would you do in her place?

Create your own ending to Lineo's story using our online comic creator. You can share your creation with your friends on your favourite social media channels.

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Fast facts: Talking about HIV with a partner

Telling your partner about your HIV status can be daunting and many people fear rejection. Here are a few things to think about so you can feel prepared.

- Remember that you don't have anything to apologise for, simply because you are living with HIV.
- Before you talk to your partner it can help to have some information on hand to share with them. They may think that HIV means you don't have long to live, or that you won't be able to have sex safely in future, or have a family. If you can help them to understand the facts about HIV, and reassure them, they are less likely to react negatively. There is lots of information at www.avert.org.
- Think about the best time to tell them – a time when they won't be rushing somewhere and are less likely to be stressed.
- Find a place where you are unlikely to be interrupted so you can take your time. Give them time to take in what you're saying. Check they understand and offer to answer any questions they have.
- Whatever your partner's reaction is at first, be aware that reactions can change over time.

- If you've had unprotected sex with your partner, it's important for them to get tested. Once they know their status you can decide the best way to practice safer sex together in the future.
- Fear and stigma can stir up very strong emotions. Be prepared that your status may make some people afraid or judgmental. Remember that you are still you, and your status doesn't define you.

And remember...

- Talking to a friend or family member you trust about your HIV status can help you process your thoughts and emotions. Keeping it all to yourself can make you feel isolated.
- You should never feel pressured into disclosing your status to anyone you don't trust. If you have recently found out you are HIV-positive, it may be worth taking some time to take in the news yourself, so you are better prepared to tell others.

Ideas for discussion:

1. What do you think are the benefits to YOU and to YOUR PARTNER of disclosing your status? Think of at least 3 benefits for each of you.
2. Why do you think it may be particularly difficult and emotional telling someone who is a current or previous sexual partner about your HIV status?
3. If you're in a relationship, think about what kind of reaction you think your partner would have if you told them you were HIV-positive. What would be your reaction if they told you they were HIV-positive?
4. What places (or people), in your community or nearby, do you think could give you support, or help you think through possible reactions?
5. How do you think telling your partner might change your relationship and your feelings for each other? Think of both the ways it could damage and improve your relationship.
6. If you live in a small community or rural area what do you think are the particular things you might need to think about, and prepare yourself for, when telling a partner?
7. What do you think might be some of the questions that your partner will have for you?

8. You have the right to protect your own privacy, and your partner has some right to expect honesty from you. Which is more important, privacy or honesty?
9. If a partner or friend discloses to you, in what ways can you react or support them?



“What if he doesn’t accept it? What if he tells everyone about my HIV status?”

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