

Factsheet #2: Newly diagnosed with HIV

YOUR KEY MESSAGE:

“A positive HIV result gives you the chance to live a good and healthy life: because there’s effective treatment now for people living with HIV. Knowing your test result helps you to live your dreams and to do what you really want to do with your life.”

WHEN WERE YOU DIAGNOSED?

Chart participant time of diagnosis on a continuum from the day of the workshop ‘today’ back in time to the person who has been diagnosed the longest in the group. (See Diagram Aid on the next page). The goal is to facilitate info sharing between clients and help the most recently diagnosed see that crisis, shock, fear and anxiety recedes over time. Importantly, this process helps people with HIV in the room ‘teach each other’ without the need for the facilitator.

WHAT TO SAY ABOUT NEW DIAGNOSIS

You are not dying – many people with HIV live normal and healthy lives with HIV and you can too.

You are not alone – there are many other people living with HIV. We can help you to meet some of them. We can also help you to learn to live with this news and help you decide what to do next.

You can live life as you did before – living with HIV doesn’t mean you are sick or disabled. Today you know you have HIV but your life doesn’t have to change a lot. If you are sick, the sooner you treat the quicker you can return to better health.

Take your time – relax and breathe. You don’t need to do anything – take some time to think about things for a few days.

MORE ABOUT LIVING WITH HIV

HIV is a virus. HIV is a virus that damages your body. Being told that you have HIV means that you have HIV in your body. If you don’t look after your HIV health then HIV can make you sick. But if you take care of your HIV health you can live a long and successful life.

Love and HIV. You can still find love when you have HIV. You can still have a family and children when you are living with HIV. Talk to your doctor about treatment that can help.

You don’t need to tell anyone right now. But it can be helpful to tell someone you trust and that you know will be supportive and caring.

Some important questions:

- Will they tell other people that you have HIV? Are they going to gossip? If yes, then not telling them is a good idea.
- Will they be angry or upset with you? If yes, then delay telling them until you’ve had more time to think it through.
- Will they judge you? If yes, then delay telling them until you’ve had more time to think.

HELPFUL SERVICE HINTS

Listen more than you talk. The easiest way to establish a caring relationship with a person newly diagnosed with HIV is to focus on **listening much more than talking**. Keep the attention on the person with HIV and not on yourself. This can be hard to do - especially when the client keeps asking questions or is asking for you to share your own experiences.

Diagram Aid #2 New Diagnosis with HIV

This interactive process involves workshop facilitators asking participants to disclose the date of their HIV diagnosis and then charting participant's answers on a continuum (like the diagram below). It is recommended that you make this a physical activity: use toilet paper to stretch out a long line across the entire middle of the workshop floor and then put one facilitator at the end of the line. This facilitator says: "I'm standing here at the end of this line. Where I'm standing represents *today*. The rest of this line represents the past. I want you to order yourselves along this timeline according to the person most recently diagnosed with HIV to the person who has been living with the knowledge of their HIV positive status the longest". (The result of this should be the person most recently diagnosed closest to the facilitator on the line and the person who has been living with the knowledge of their HIV status the longest at the very end of the line).

If you wish, you can ask people to then place something that they own along the line and then sit back down or you can keep people standing along the line.

Now, go through the follow process:

1. Start with the person most recently diagnosed. Ask them to describe their current thinking and feelings about living with HIV.
2. Move to the next most recently diagnosed and ask them to describe their current thinking and feelings about living with HIV.
3. Continue this process until you reach the person who has been living with HIV the longest and ask the same questions.

