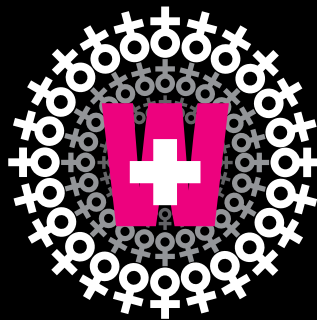


# Discussion Guide



**PWN**  
cares

## Keeping It Real: Being Trans & Living with HIV

*This discussion guide is designed to be just that--a guide. You don't need to use all of it. As a facilitator, you can pick and choose which questions to ask. Questions are in bold italics, marked "Q". Facilitation notes and suggestions (not necessarily to be read aloud) are in italics.*

**For more information about the PWNcares series and for links to stream or download the PWNcares video, visit [pwn-usa.org/pwncares](http://pwn-usa.org/pwncares).**

### Active Listening Activity

*This can be done either as a large group activity or a partner activity. If as a partner activity, you can use or adapt this script below.*

Turn to the person next to you. We're going to do a short activity. Practice active listening when you're not speaking. That means when you're listening, you're not practicing what you're saying. You are truly listening to your partner. Put your hands together. The partner with larger hands is partner B. Partner A will answer the questions first, and Partner B's job is to actively listen and silently show your partner, with your face and your body, that you are paying attention to what they are sharing with you.

### Finding Out

In the video, the two transgender women of color interviewed discuss the difficulties they faced upon learning their serostatus. They expressed feeling alone and without support around this life-changing diagnosis. Jada expressed having gone through the stages of grief, presumably for the life she thought was coming to an end, for 10 years. Tiommi states she learned of her diagnosis due to another health problem most have not heard was related to HIV and worked alone to find resources, but discusses other barriers to getting in care.



***Q: How did you find out you were living with HIV? Who was the first person you told you were living with HIV? How did they react?***

*Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.*

***Q: How was your experience early on with health care providers? How did that experience impact your engagement in care?***

*Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.*

Jada mentions that she was referred to a support group that was full of white, gay men who treated

her more as an object of sexual attention than as a fragile person needing support. In Arkansas, Tiommi was not referred to any support at all.

**Q: Have you been to support groups before? If so, what was your experience like? Did you feel you could relate to the members of the group?**

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

**Q: What do you think health care providers can do when giving people a positive diagnosis to make them feel less afraid and more supported?**

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

## Facing Stigma & Discrimination

Tiommi and Jada discuss the current research estimating that 1 in 5 trans Latin@s and 1 in 2 Black trans women are living with HIV. Tiommi says that being stigmatized, misgendered and dead-named in health care settings prevent many trans women from seeking testing, care or medical services. She also says that lack of access to transition-related care results in trans women sharing injection equipment for hormones.

Jada rebuts the common assumption that trans women of color diagnosed with HIV acquired the virus through sex work.

**Q: Have you had consistently had access to the health care you need (HIV-related, mental health, gender-related health care if needed, sexual and reproductive health care)? How do you think your access to care or lack thereof has affected you?**

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

**Q: Have you had an excellent health care or service provider? What made them so good? Have you had a particularly bad one? What made them bad?**

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.



**Q: Have you felt people made assumptions about how you contracted HIV? Why do you think they made those assumptions? How did you respond to them?**

Give participants 3-5 minutes to

**Q: Having gone through an HIV diagnosis yourself, what would you say to a friend or relative who tested positive? How is it similar or different to what the first friends or family members you disclosed to said?**

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

answer this question.

Tiommi says that trans women who do sex work are very unlikely to disclose their status, due to criminalization and fear of violence.

Jada and Tiommi both talk about being looked down on by others, including family members, for being trans. Facing stigma within one's own home, with employers and even in places of worship can leave one vulnerable to acquiring HIV, with few opportunities once one has HIV, and with limited options for health care.

**Q: How do you think identifying as transgender or gender non-conforming can make an HIV diagnosis even more challenging? How does living with HIV make being transgender or gender non-conforming more challenging?**

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

**Q: Do you agree with Tiommi that laws criminalizing HIV and sex work leave trans women more vulnerable to HIV and violence? What kind of changes in laws and policies might make it easier for trans women to prevent HIV and to stay engaged in care if they have acquired HIV?**

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question. If possible, review your state (and/or local) laws around HIV disclosure, exposure and transmission, and any penalty enhancements that exist for sex workers living with HIV.

## Resources

Social support is critical for women living with HIV to thrive and leads to better health outcomes. In-person support groups can be very therapeutic. Your local AIDS service organization or clinic may offer support groups. You can locate local services at [www.poz.com/directory](http://www.poz.com/directory)

In addition to local in-person services and groups, there are national and international groups that host calls, webinars, videoconferences, and periodic events, as well as sharing information, blogs and other resources for women living with HIV. Here are a few:

### **Positive Women's Network - USA**

[www.pwn-usa.org](http://www.pwn-usa.org)

### **The Well Project**

[thewellproject.org](http://thewellproject.org)

### **The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW)**

[www.icwglobal.org](http://www.icwglobal.org)

### **Global Network of People Living with HIV**

[www.gnpplus.net](http://www.gnpplus.net)

Make sure you are getting accurate information about HIV, treatment options and issues relevant to people living with HIV! Here are a few good sources of HIV-related information and resources:

[www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com)

[www.poz.com](http://www.poz.com)

[www.hivplusmag.com](http://www.hivplusmag.com)

Fear of intimate partner violence may

prevent women and people of trans experience living with HIV from disclosing their HIV status to their partners. If you are worried about this or about any signs of intimate partner violence, call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)** [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org)

Women and people of trans experience with HIV suffer from high rates of depression, and many may feel like their alcohol or drug use is out of control. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Help is available. Call **SAMHSA's National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)**

Health care and service providers wishing to be more effective in engaging and retaining trans women in care may wish to refer to the 2016 Positively Trans Needs Assessment: [transgenderlawcenter.org/programs/positively-trans/research](http://transgenderlawcenter.org/programs/positively-trans/research)

Find more information, other videos and more resources at [pwn-usa.org](http://pwn-usa.org)