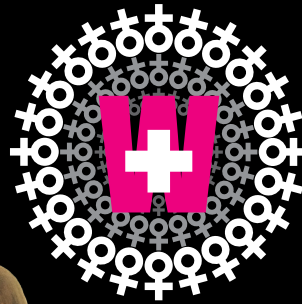


Discussion Guide



PWN
cares



Dating 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.

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.

How has dating changed since your diagnosis?

In the video, five women living with HIV discuss their experiences--good and bad--with dating as people living with HIV. Three of them (Davina, Thandi, and Bré) describe ways in which dating, relationships, and intimacy have changed since they were diagnosed. Two (Tiffany and Tranisha) were born with HIV and have had to navigate the challenges of dating with HIV from the very beginning.



Positive Women's Network - USA

Q: Have you dated or been in a relationship since your diagnosis? If yes, has your experience with dating changed? If not, why not?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: What have you found to be the biggest challenge or biggest barrier to dating?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

To disclose or not to disclose?

One of the most challenging parts of dating while living with HIV, whether you were born with it or acquired it later, is deciding if, when, how, and to whom to disclose your HIV status.

The women interviewed in the video are all public about their status now, but some of them were not always public, and describe different reactions to their disclosures to people they were dating and intimate partners.

Q: Which woman or experience did you find yourself relating to most closely when it came to describing experiences with disclosure? Why?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.



Q: Tranisha describes being threatened with legal action after disclosing. Tiffany describes measures she takes, involving social media posting and a contract for intimate partners to sign acknowledging that she has disclosed before sexual activity. Have you ever been concerned about possible criminalization related to sex? How has this affected your choices around dating, sex, and/or disclosure?

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

Q: How do you make the decision of when, where, how, and to whom to disclose your HIV status in the context of dating or relationships? Have you changed the way you do it as a result of positive or negative experiences with disclosure?

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

Intimacy in the age of undetectable equals untransmittable

Scientists and HIV specialists around the world have confirmed that a person living with HIV who has an undetectable viral load for at least 6 months and remains on treatment cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners, even without condoms (undetectable=untransmittable, or U=U).

The women in the video describe how understanding that they cannot transmit HIV has changed their relationships and intimacy.

Q: Has your doctor told you about U=U? If not, where else have you heard about it?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: Has U=U changed your thoughts, feelings, or actions around dating and intimacy at all? If so, how?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: Have you tried to educate people you were dating or hoping to date around U=U? How did it go?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: Has U=U affected your decisions about when, how, why, and to whom to disclose in the context of dating? How so (or why not)?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.



Loving yourself and being loved

Toward the end of the video, the women interviewed describe how their own level of comfort around and attitude toward their HIV status--and themselves as people--has affected how others view and treat them.

"It's up to us to do the work we need to do internally to make sure we're in a healthy space to date," says Bré.

"I've always heard people say that when they feel better about themselves as someone living with HIV, it almost shines and is able to spread to other people. If we see that positive reflection, other

people will see that positive reflection as well," explains Tranisha.

Q: How would you characterize your own attitude toward your HIV status? Do you think that has affected your relationships? What are some steps you can take to work toward a healthier relationship with yourself and others?



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

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

The Well Project

thewellproject.org

The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW)

www.icwglobal.org

Global Network of People Living with HIV

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

www.poz.com

www.hivplusmag.com

Fear of intimate partner violence may prevent women 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

National Domestic Violence

Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)

thehotline.org

Women 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)**