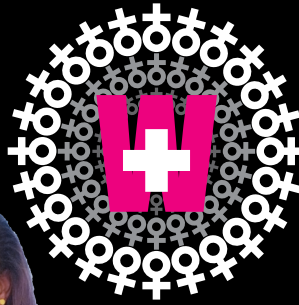


Discussion Guide



PWN
cares



Healthy Beyond ARVs

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.

What Is Mental Health?

In the video, five women living with HIV discuss what mental health means to them, and how mental illness has showed up for them.

Alicia describes a feeling of chaos--too many thoughts jumbled up, out of control, to find calm. Bre points out the different elements that need to be in place in order to have real mental health: housing, food, friends. Thandi explains that mental health for her means being able to cope with everyday stresses.



Q: What does mental health mean to you? Do you think you are mentally healthy right now?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: Have there been times in your life when you felt you were not in control of your thoughts? Explain how that happened and what it felt like.

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: What do you think Bré meant when she said, "Housing is mental health. Food is mental health. Having friends is mental health."?

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

What Does Mental Illness Look Like?

Mental health challenges can show up in a variety of ways. Angel says that she can be “too much,” and that consequently, doctors often want to medicate her; but she does not always like the way she feels when medicated.

Tiffany was born with HIV, and experienced challenges with mental health related to her status, HIV stigma, as well as abuse happening in her home. This manifested itself in panic attacks. She found she had trouble explaining where that panic was coming from.

Alicia experienced suicidal thoughts following traumatic experiences, and at times found herself in her own world.



Q: *What ideas about mental health and mental illness did you have while you were growing up? Where did these ideas come from?*

Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Q: *Listening to the 5 women share their experiences, did you find yourself relating to one or more of the women? Which one(s) and why?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

Q: *Many people suffering from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) turn to alcohol or drugs, and/or consider suicide. Why do you think this happens? How do you think it impacts one's mental health and stability over the long term?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

What Helps You Feel Better?

Everyone is different, and what helps one person feel better may not work for another person.

Thandi found that support groups, along with stopping drinking and attending 12-step programs, helped her find equilibrium. She has also found advocacy to be therapeutic, reminding her that she is valuable to her community and has an important role to play.

Bré likes to remind herself that going through tough times mentally and emotionally is part of growing, and that, like a tree, some things have to break and fall off in order for her to grow and survive.

Tiffany mentions that counseling helped her understand the importance of letting feelings out and identifying them. Angel talks about journaling and spending time with other women living with HIV. Alicia discusses the importance of finding physical locations that give her serenity and calmness to cope with emotions.



Q: *Can you relate to one of the women more than the others in this section (about ways to deal with or overcome mental health challenges)? Which one and why?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

Q: *When you feel anxiety, depression, stress, or other mental health challenges coming on, how do you cope with those feelings? Do you think these coping mechanisms or strategies are healthy? Do they make you feel better in the long term?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

Q: *Are you aware of, or have you tried, other ways to manage or cope with negative or stressful feelings? What are those?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.



Advocacy & Mental Health

In the last few minutes of the video, the women interviewed talk about how getting involved in advocacy has been therapeutic for them. Reasons mentioned include the opportunity to talk; to get to know like-minded people who can serve as mentors; to understand how they can have a positive impact on their communities.



Q: *Have you ever engaged in advocacy work or considered it? Why or why not? If you did, what parts did you find most challenging and what parts most were most rewarding? If not, what do you think prevents you from trying it?*

Give participants 3-5 minutes to answer this question.

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

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)

Health care providers & domestic violence service providers can find a toolkit & trainings for addressing the intersections of HIV & IPV from the **National Network to End Domestic Violence** at:

bit.ly/nnedv-poz-safe