

JAN'S LESSONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Lessons

1. It is not only young people who are at risk of getting HIV – you can contract and live with HIV at a mature age as well.
2. Having HIV can work on your mind – I fought my self-stigma by talking to my virus and relying on my strong will to live my life to the fullest.
3. Older people living with HIV can face different kinds of social stigma, like being made to feel an outcast in some social circles.
4. In a relationship, you should be open and honest with your partner, and think of your partner before disclosing to the outside world.
5. As an older person, monitor your overall health regularly, keeping an eye not just on 'numbers' like your CD4 count, but also on things like your heart.
6. As my schedule is not too hectic, I have found it easier to take my ARVs regularly and on time, and do not have to worry about being on ARVs for so many years.
7. However rough things get with your health, draw on all the medical and personal support you need, and keep hope burning that you will soon lead as normal a life as possible.

8. My unexpected journey of living with HIV opened up opportunities for me to grow as a person, and to be able to help others who need support.

Questions

1. How have you coped as someone living with HIV at a mature age, or how have you supported someone living with HIV at a mature age?
2. How can you support family members, who have elderly parents living with HIV?
3. How can older people, including senior citizens, be encouraged to go for an HIV test?
4. What methods can you think of to make yourself strong mentally and to develop a will to live when facing adversity, such as repeated ill health?
5. What are the different aspects of your health and wellness that you need to become more aware of, and have checked, as you get older?
6. How can you ensure that you maximise the benefits of taking ARVs and minimise the side-effects that some medications may have?