

**POSITIVELY ADDRESSING
PERSONAL BARRIERS-
LETS TALK ABOUT..... SEX,
DISCLOSURE
& RELATIONSHIPS**

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Agenda

● Relationships-

- The serodiscordant couple
- Sex
- Disclosure-Partners
- Friends
- Family
- Children

● Family planning-

- Pregnancy
- Coping Strategies

Objectives

- Identify the personal barriers that People Living with HIV & Hemophilia experience in relation to:
 - Relationships-family, friends, partners
 - Disclosure of status
 - Sex
 - Pregnancy
- Identify practical strategies to address and cope with the challenges of HIV.
- Identify useful resources for People Living with HIV, their family, friends and others to access.

HIV & HAEMOPHILIA

- Already living with a pre-existing, potentially disabling condition.
- Mode of infection differs from the dominant HIV population in Australia.
- A minority within a minority.
- Larger heterosexual population.
- Less likely to access sexual health services.
- Less likely to know other HIV positive people.
- Salient events related to coping:
 - Disclosure
 - Sex
 - Relationship issues
 - Medication/treatment decisions
 - Procreation issues

SERODISCORDANT (Intimate) RELATIONSHIPS

- SERODISCORDANT-Relationships with one positive and one negative partner.
- What are the issues?
- Concerns about:
 - Transmission-positive partner
 - Sero discordant-fear of infecting partner with HIV (68.9%)²
 - Remaining negative-both partners
 - 'Caregiving role' negative partner
 - Longevity
 - Overly Cautious
 - Cost of ARV, unemployment, sickness

Relationships- The negative partner

(The Straightpoz study)

- Negative partners tended to rate health less favourably¹.
- Depression & stress common.
- 50% (approx) reported their lives being affected by HIV because of stigma, secrecy, isolation & concerns about partners health & future¹.
- Neg partners feelings often not addressed due to concerns about positive partner.

Relationships

- Effective communication is vital in a relationship.
- Keep issues in perspective.
- Careful not to attribute all problems to HIV.
- Remember (and remind) each other why you are together.
- Seek professional help if needed.

Sex-HIV *DOES* change sex

- Sex-safe or not?
- Half of serodiscordant couples had unprotected sex ¹.
- This is despite an almost universal acceptance that transmission of the virus was opposed¹.
- Why?
- Difficulty in using condoms, maintaining erections, reduced sensation, lack of safe sex culture, VL suppression, reinforced negative status, effects on the relationship, procreation.
- Unprotected sex does not necessarily equate to unsafe sex for couples (never assume)¹.

Managing difficult questions

● 'Why do we need to use a condom?'

● Possible replies:

- Let's not risk it.
- You're too special.
- We'll be more relaxed.
- It's better for both of us.
- You can trust me without any worries.
- We can have good sex and stay healthy.
- I want to protect you.
- It makes sex last longer.

Disclosure

- Partners- telling him/her I'm positive
- There is no secret formula
- Consider:
 - Why? (purpose), sexual contact, emotional closeness, transparency, support, other
 - Where? environment
 - When? time, day, appropriateness of when
- Immediate disclosure
- Wait & see
- Develop trust
- How? Medium, resources (pamphlets, phone/web addresses, other). Scripting may be helpful
- Post disclosure support

Disclosure-talking to the in-laws, other family members and friends.

- Who else needs to know?
- Why do we want to tell them?
- Why do we feel they want to know?
- Will they keep it to themselves?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages for each of us?
- Are we likely to regret that we have told?

Disclosure to children

- Be truthful.
- Use simple words.
- Deliver information in chunks.
- Be confident and disclose when you are ready.
- Siblings are best told around the same time.
- One child families? Sole parent? Consider use of a third party.
- Make use of resources eg. HIV and me (Lambert, S.2005).

Disclosure to children

- Check understanding of confidentiality-private matter.
- Be mindful of a child's difficulty to keep “secrets”.
- Observe your child's behaviour, emotions and communication.
- Act early if you notice any changes in functioning.

Disclosure

Remember.....

- The REAL v the PERCEIVED- Anticipatory stress & anxiety is often worse than the ACTUAL conversation.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Consider the pros and cons of disclosing to others (double barrel technique).
- Have the conversation BEFORE you become sexually active with a new partner and NOT during sexual activity.
- Consider and talk about what to do in an emergency-PEP.

Family Planning

- Can be stressful for many couples regardless of status.
- It is normal to worry about whether your baby is healthy or not regardless of status.
- Excessive worry, inability to relax, despite reassurance, persistent low mood.
- Seek professional help.

Family Planning

- Pre-treatment counselling
- Individual &/or couple
- Discuss treatment, concerns, anxieties etc
- Relationship issues
- Managing emotions/screening
- Managing uncertainty/disappointment
- Extraneous life stressors-financial stress, employment etc.
- Referral options

Family Planning

- Ongoing Therapy
- Support throughout the process & pregnancy.
- Address & monitor psychological co-morbidities.
- Address issues contemporaneously.
- Learn specific strategies for anxiety eg. relaxation, distraction, cognitive challenging.

Coping Strategies

● Using previous coping strategies

- What strategies have you relied upon during difficult periods in the past?
- What has been helpful/not helpful (in the short term and long term)?

● Developing new coping strategies

- Moving beyond “yes, but....” responses
- “What would you suggest to a friend...?”

Coping Strategies

- Education-be an informed patient.
- Participate in decision making & planning.
- Be prepared. Highly invasive, medical, time consuming, expensive, stressful, uncertain period.
- Seek support.

“Absolutely, Absolutely.....once all the grunt work is over....I basically equated it to any couple struggling to conceive...I stopped thinking about us as a serodiscordant couple because I really wasn’t worried about that anymore...I was just hoping that the procedure was successful”

Christa, www.thebody.com

Resources

- <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/adahps/>
- <http://www.acon.org.au/>
- <http://www.sesahs.nsw.gov.au/albionstcentre/>
- <http://www.pozhet.org.au/>
- <http://positivelife.org.au/>
- <http://www.qahc.org.au/>
- <http://www.qpp.org.au/>
- <http://www.positivedirections.org.au/>
- <http://health.howstuffworks.com/>
- www.pozhet.org.au
- www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au
- <http://www.straightarrows.org.au/>
- <http://www.aidsmap.com/>
- www.thebody.com
- Sexual Health Services, AIDS Councils, Family Planning in your region

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