

# YES, YES YOU CAN TELL

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families

Over Coming Secrecy and Isolation,  
Addressing HIV Disclosure

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## Objectives

By the end of the session consumers will be able:

- to self-identify both personal reasons for disclosure.
- to self-identify benefits of disclosing ones HIV status.
- to identify key steps to self disclosure of ones HIV status.

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# What IS Disclosure??

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## Disclosure

- the release of relevant information.
- both the conscious and unconscious act of revealing more about ourselves to others.

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## Why Disclose

Disclosure is an important for a number of different reasons; including reasons that support public health goals

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Disclosure of ones HIV status may:

- motivate sexual partners to seek testing,
- change behavior
- facilitate other health behaviors that may improve the management of HIV, and
- ultimately decrease transmission of HIV.

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## Some Good Reasons

- Seeking support
- Seeking intimacy
- Medical reasons
- To reduce the risk of transmission

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## Advantages vs. Disadvantages



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## Positive Outcomes of Disclosure

- Increased support,
- Acceptance, and kindness.
- Less anxiety,
- Fewer symptoms of depression, and
- Increased social support
- Many individuals have noted to feel closer to their friends and family members or others in their social network after disclosure.

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## Benefits of HIV status disclosure to sexual partners

In addition to the public health benefits of disclosure that include expanded awareness of risk that

- may lead to decreased sexual risk-taking and ultimately decreased transmission of HIV, there are also
- potential benefits to the individual who chooses to share results with his/her sexual partners.
- Disclosure of HIV status to sexual partners may lead to:

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## WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO TELL...



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## The Steps

- The first step is adjustment to the diagnosis. At this stage in the disclosure process, individuals may need help adjusting to their diagnosis and reaching a level of personal acceptance.
- The second step involves an evaluation of personal disclosure skills. Individuals need to evaluate whether they possess the skills necessary for telling others.
- The third step involves evaluating the appropriateness of disclosing to another individual. This process involves taking inventory of one's social network and deciding on an individual basis who should be told, taking into account certain criteria such as role and physical distance from that recipient.

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- The fourth step is evaluating the circumstances for disclosure. There may be certain circumstances that prohibit disclosure to certain individuals.
- The fifth step in the process involves anticipating the reactions of the potential individuals. Individuals need to weigh these anticipated reactions against the anticipated benefits of disclosure to each individual.
- Finally –the sixth step– individuals identify their motivation for disclosure to each individual.

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**Limited Disclosure**

With limited disclosure one decides at different stages in life

- Who to tell,
- When,
- Why,
- How, and
- Where

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**Limited Disclosure The Who**

- Sexual Partner
- Family
- Spiritual Religious Leaders
- Friends, Co-workers
- Others (IVDU Partners, church members, extended family..)

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### Limited Disclosure Family

- Decide who in your family is able to and willing to provide support and maintain your confidentiality
- Determine if HIV 101 is necessary
- Seek assistance from someone at your agency or you trust to give good advice
- Identify an environment that you will feel safe in

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### Limited Disclosure Sexual Partners

- Make a list of those who might have been exposed
- Request assistance from your agency or one that provides Partner Services
- If self disclosing always weight the risk!
- Always choose the safest environment possible!

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### Limited Disclosure Churches

- Always consider the past doctrines and teachings of the Church leadership
- Does the Church have an HIV/AIDS Ministry?
- Discuss confidentiality concerns
- If necessary seek out a Church with a history of inclusion....

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## Limited Disclosure Friends

- Who among them do you believe is least judgmental
- Who would honor your confidentiality
- Who can and would be supportive

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## Unlimited Disclosure

- HIV Positive Advocates
- Public Testimonies
- Television, Radio or other Media
- Agency Peer Educators
- Can still have some limits but confidentiality is not guaranteed once the cat is out of the bag.

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## Standing in Someone Else's Shoe's



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## Anticipating Reactions

- Best case scenario's
- Worst case scenario's
- Realistic scenario's

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## Barriers of Disclosure

The most common barriers to disclosure noted by women included

- fear of abandonment,
- fear of accusations of infidelity,
- fear of rejection/discrimination,
- fear of violence,
- fear of disappointing family members

Hays R et al. Disclosing HIV seropositivity to significant others. AIDS, 2004; 7:425-431.

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## Barriers of Disclosure

The most common barriers to disclosure noted by men included

- ❖ fear of rejection,
- ❖ Challenges of ones masculinity ,
- ❖ fear of disappointing family members, and
- ❖ fear of disclosure of infidelity.

Hays R et al. Disclosing HIV seropositivity to significant others. AIDS, 2004; 7:425-431.

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## Over Coming the Barriers

- ✦ Ethical responsibility and concern for partner's health was the major reason cited for disclosing to sexual partners,
- ✦ Seeking social support was the primary reason for disclosure to friends and family,
- ✦ Increasing social support may as well be a reason for disclosure to partners, family, friends and medical providers

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Need more information  
contact  
AIDS Alliance



- [AIDS-Alliance.org](http://AIDS-Alliance.org)
- Linda H. Scruggs  
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(202)785-3564



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