



# LOVING CAREFULLY

A guide for women

safe information **Be Faithful**  
Respect persons with HIV use condoms consistently  
*respect between women & men*



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## Acknowledgements

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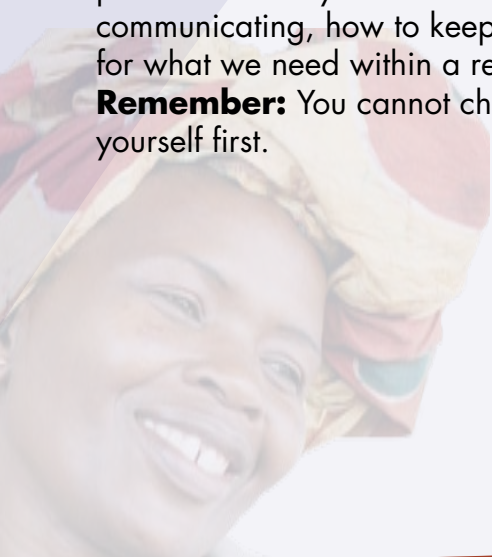
We hope that you will find this leaflet beneficial.

### About this booklet:

HIV and AIDS are a big problem in our country. Many people get infected with HIV through sex. There are different things men and women have to consider in preventing HIV. One thing is talking about HIV risk and the need for safe sexual practice in a relationship.

This booklet is meant to help women talk to their husbands, partners and boyfriends. It contains information on how to start communicating, how to keep communicating and how to negotiate for what we need within a relationship

**Remember:** You cannot change anything if you do not change yourself first.



John and Mary have been married for six years now and have two children. Three months ago, Mary heard that John is having an affair with someone in his office. The problem is that every time Mary tries to talk to John about what she has heard they end up fighting. During the time she has been married, she has had an STI twice but even when she told him about it, John refused to go with her to the local clinic. Mary is unhappy with the way things are, but is afraid of what will happen if she approaches John. Mary's parents and friends just say this is the way things are in marriage and she must live with it.

Does Mary's story sound familiar?



Do you suspect that your partner may be having other sexual partners?  
Do you struggle with talking to your partner about the risk of HIV?

- Many people in Zimbabwe, even married people or people in long term relationships, are getting HIV through sex.

- If you have more than one sexual partner, you increase your chances of getting HIV.
- Scientists have found that you are most likely to get HIV if you have sex with someone with a high concentration of HIV in their blood. This occurs when someone first gets HIV before they have any symptoms at all. If you have sex with someone who has just been infected with HIV, you are more likely to catch it yourself and then to pass it on to someone else.
- Having more than one sexual partner at the same time can mean that you become part of a sexual network. In a sexual network, although you only have two partners, you are also exposed to the infections of your partner's partners.



- It is possible for one partner in the relationship to be HIV positive, while the other partner is still HIV negative - even if they had unprotected sex. You might think you don't need to protect yourself with someone you've already had sex with. But, in Zimbabwe, 1 out of 7 couples are sero-discordant, which is a word that we use to mean that one partner is HIV positive while the partner HIV negative.

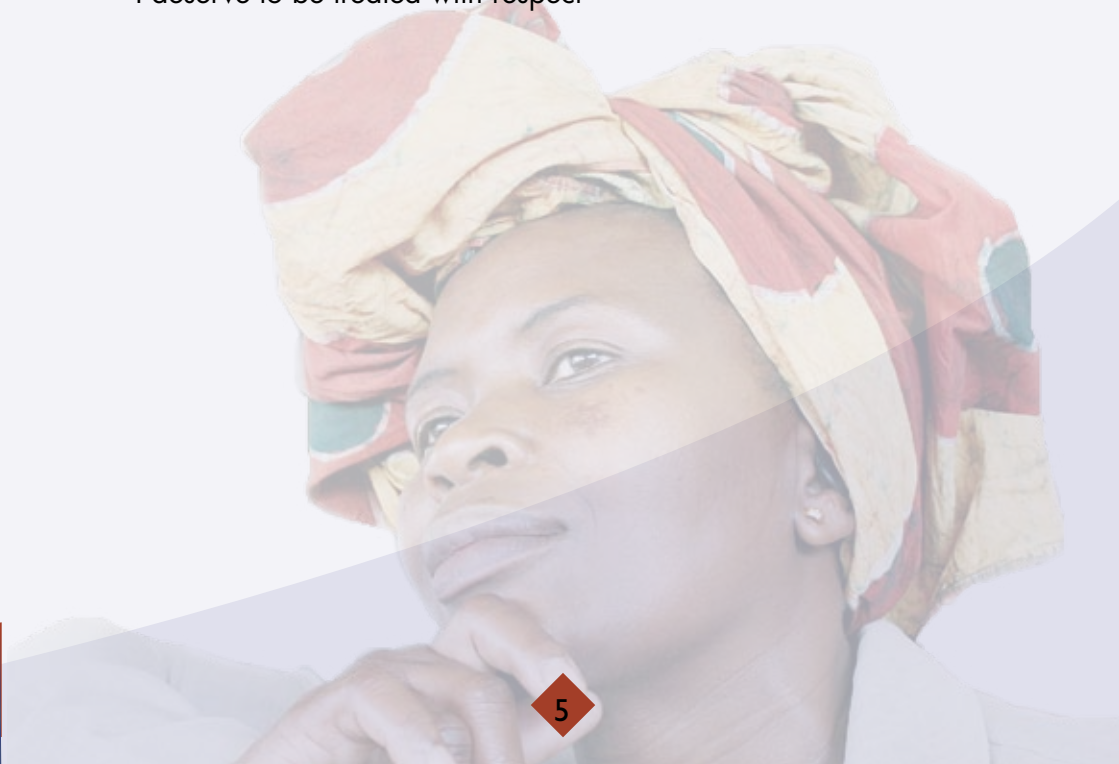
## Being Assertive

Being assertive means saying what you think and want clearly, while at the same time expressing your own needs and feelings. It also means respecting the needs and feelings of others. Some people think that if they assert themselves others will think of their behavior as aggressive. But there is a difference between being assertive and aggressive.

Assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others. Aggressive people attack or ignore others' opinions in favor of their own. Passive people don't state their opinions at all, but rather suffer in silence.

To help you to be assertive say this to yourself every day to remind yourself:

- I am important
- I have a right to be in control of my own life
- I deserve to be happy
- I deserve to be loved
- I deserve to be treated with respect



## Sexual rights and responsibilities

We all have the right to be treated fairly and equally. This applies for both men and women, in the same way. But we must remember that with rights also come responsibilities. As human beings we have the right to make decisions on our sexuality. With this right comes the responsibility to avoid getting sexually transmitted infections and passing them on to others. As a woman you may not always have the courage to insist on these rights. This is why you need to choose to be assertive and be responsible for your life when it comes to sexual matters. The following are other sexual rights and responsibilities that you have.

| <b>Some of our SEXUAL RIGHTS are the right:</b>   | <b>Some of our SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITIES are:</b>   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To choose when, with whom and how to have sex</li></ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To protect yourself from getting infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To enjoy sex</li></ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To support your partner to enjoy sex</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To protect yourself from the risk of disease</li></ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To protect your partner from sexually transmitted infections</li></ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To avoid a pregnancy that you do not want</li></ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To seek and use information on family planning</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To get information on sexuality and sexual health</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To use information obtained to protect your health</li></ul>  |

## Negotiating in a relationship

Negotiating is a way to solve disagreements and problems in your relationship. It means discussing things with your partner until you find a way to solve things that both of you can live with. It's much better to negotiate a solution than to make your partner do what you want – if you decide together what the solution is, you will both feel more like doing it. It's also better to decide together than to just keep quiet and live with the problem. If you choose to keep quiet, you will become more and more upset with your partner.

## Building the confidence to talk to your partner

Sometimes men and women are scared to say what they want. Then they are disappointed and angry with their partner for not making them happy. Speak up. You want to clearly express your needs and feelings while respecting the needs and feelings of your partner. Mind reader, the following hints can help you build the confidence to talk to your partner.

### Preparing your message

Think through what you want to communicate. You therefore can consider preparing to talk in the following way:

1. **Explain your feelings and the problem. Be clear.** For example, you can say "I feel as if I'm being used. When we have sex, I do not enjoy it." Make sure that you use I, not you. In other words, it's better to say "I don't enjoy sex as much as I would like to" and not "You are not a good lover".
2. **Make your request clearly.** For example, you can say "I would like it more if we both enjoyed it when we have sex." Make sure you include how you feel about it. Say "I feel disappointed when sex is over so quickly."
3. **Ask how your partner feels about your request.** For example, you can say "Is that okay with you?"
4. **Answer – make sure you answer what your partner has asked.** For example, you can say "Yes, you're right – I'm not too good at telling you what I want. I will try harder."
5. **Accept that they have agreed.** For example, you can say "Thanks, great, I appreciate that."

### Practice makes perfect

Once you have thought through what you are going to say, practise by yourself before you talk to your partner about a problem. You could even practise talking to an empty chair and pretending that your partner is there. This will help you to be clear when you talk to your partner.

## Be careful of your actions

- We say more with our bodies than with words. The tone of your voice and your body posture can be very powerful. If you keep your hands on your hips while you are talking you will look aggressive. If you look at the floor or wring your hands while you are talking you will look weak.
- Avoid becoming emotional - crying or shouting can stop a discussion from ending in a good way.

## Dealing with HIV related challenges

Nowadays, relationships have more challenges than ever. Not only do we have to negotiate every day living, having children, talking about how we spend our money, and agreeing on how we will share chores, we also have to think about HIV and AIDS.

Here are some stories of how other people deal with these problems. You can learn from the way other people do things.

### Starting a relationship

When Johanna first met Petros, they were very much in love, but they were both careful to use a condom. After a few weeks, they talked about going for testing together. They both tested negative the first time, but they agreed to carry on using condoms until the second test, because the counsellor explained to them that sometimes HIV doesn't show up until three months later.

After some time, they got married. But then Petros got a job where he would have to be away from home for at least six months. They talked about it again, and agreed to be faithful to one another. But they also agreed that after Petros came back they would use condoms when they had sex until they could both go and test again. They both agreed that this way they feel safe and can fully enjoy their reunion

### Johanna's secret

- Being clear about what you want and not taking chances right from the start.
- Being assertive and consistent on the need for protection.
- Being open minded about a relationship.

## Getting him to use a condom

It is not easy to talk to your partner about using condoms, particularly when you have had unprotected sex before. Let's learn from Maria.

I love you Julius, and I want to have sex with you. But we must now use condoms until we are both tested.



But that doesn't make a difference now because we have been having unprotected sex all along. If one of us was infected, then we both must be infected by now.

You may be right but you may also be wrong. One in seven couples in Zimbabwe do not share the same HIV status despite having had unprotected sex.




Also if we are both HIV positive, the more reason we should use condoms so that we avoid re-infecting each other and help keep our viral load low. I love you, and I want to make sure we can be together for longer.

But I don't think it's worth having sex anymore if we are going to be wearing plastics. Nothing will be special and I don't think I can enjoy it.



No, Julius. Enjoying sex depends on the two of us. Let's try it and make it special for each other for the love of our lives.





This woman really knows what she's talking about. And she cares about me.

Once you have both made a decision to use condoms within your relationship, there are some things that you can do to make it easier. Here are some tips:

- Make sure you have condoms and have them ready next to the place where you will have sex
- Be friendly and excited about this new thing that you are doing
- Take time to make yourself attractive
- Prepare your partner's favourite dish for dinner
- Initiate and allow time for foreplay
- Be responsive during sex
- Practise using condoms, so that you know how to put them on and you don't break the mood

**Make it a habit:** Once you have managed to get started, make it a habit to do it again and again. Maintain this good sexual lifestyle. Remember condoms are effective in preventing HIV and unwanted pregnancy when used correctly and all the time.

## Having quality time for each other

When Sam and Kudzi first got married, they had lots of time and they also had a lot of sex. However, after they had their second child, Kudzi was always tired and never wanted to have sex. Sam got very frustrated. He talked to Kudzi about it. She found it difficult in the beginning because it felt like he didn't understand that she was tired and didn't feel very sexy. But after a while, she started to understand what he was saying, and she thought about it for a while. Then she suggested that they make some special time to have sex – so she could arrange for her mother to look after the children, and spend some time making herself look and feel good. Now Sam and Kudzi have sex more often again, and they are very happy.

Making an effort for both of you to enjoy sex will help your relationship to grow stronger – but don't put too much pressure on yourself and him. Any improvements in relationships take time and commitment.

## Dealing with rape

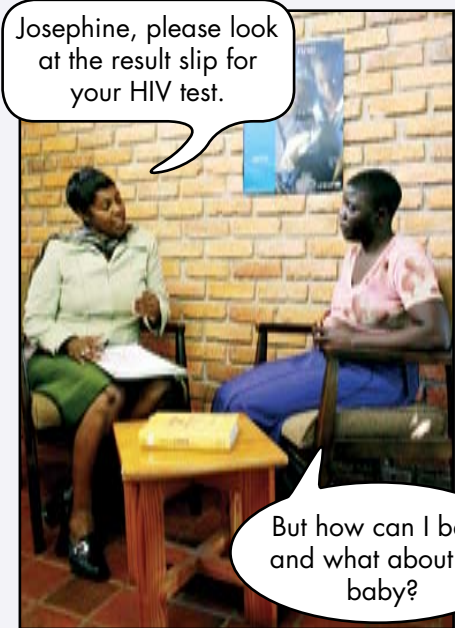
“When I was 19 years old, I was looking after my neighbour's child for her while she went to the clinic. Her brother came home, and started to flirt with me. After a while, he asked me to have sex with him. I said no, but he didn't listen. He said I had led him on because I flirted back, and he raped me. Even though I fought, he was much stronger than I was, and he managed to overpower me. Afterwards, I lay on the floor crying and he just left me there. My neighbour came home, and she didn't believe me when I told her that it was her brother. She was angry with me and threw me out. I didn't know what to do, but then another neighbour saw me crying. She asked what had happened, and when I told her, she helped me to go to the police station to report the rape.

She told me not to bath, even though I felt very dirty, because there was a chance they could get evidence from my clothes and body that would help them to catch the man who had done this to me.

At the police station, they took my statement and then I was examined by the doctor, who took samples. The doctor also gave me some tablets which he said I must take to reduce the chances of me getting infected with HIV from this rape. The police caught the man and I had to go to court to give evidence against him, which was very hard. My friendly neighbour helped me to contact a women's organization, who gave me support during the trial and helped me to live my life as a survivor instead of a victim."

- Remember – a woman has a right to say no to sex and this must be respected.
- Reporting a rape on time will help the police to collect the required evidence.
- Reporting a rape on time means you can receive emergency protection from HIV (PEP - Post Exposure Prophylaxis) and also around pregnancy. PEP can only be given within 72 hours of the rape having taken place.
- Picking up the pieces after rape can be difficult, but it is important to look for help and support.

### Deciding to have a baby, even when HIV positive



Josephine, please look at the result slip for your HIV test.

But how can I be... and what about my baby?



I understand you Josephine. It is very difficult to hear news like this.

You will have lots of thinking and talking to do when you get home. But it is possible to reduce the chances of your baby contracting HIV.



This is very bad news. But how can I protect my baby?

We will talk to the doctors about all the things to do, but I can tell you some of them.



When it is time to give birth, we will give you medicine that will help to stop you passing the virus to your baby.

The doctor's might also give you a caesarean, which will also help. We will also have to talk about how to feed your baby.



- It is hard to be HIV positive and pregnant. But there are things you can do to stop your baby from getting HIV.
- You need to talk to your partner about the need for both of you to receive counselling and testing.
- You both need to decide how you are going to handle questions from your family about medicines and feeding your baby.

**We hope you have found the ideas shared in this booklet useful for you to build self confidence to protect yourself from HIV.**

## Make a commitment

Now that you have completed this booklet make a commitment. Take a pen and complete this page with words that describe how you want to be.

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

I choose to

### **Do you need more information?**

If you would like to know more, visit your nearest health facility or call the National AIDS Council Office (NAC) nearest to you.

|                   |            |                      |            |
|-------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| NAC Head Office:  | 04-791171  | Mashonaland East:    | 079-22008  |
| Harare:           | 04-708070  | Mashonaland Central: | 011878935  |
| Bulawayo:         | 09-884077  | Matebeleland North:  | 09-882943  |
| Manicaland:       | 020-64324  | Matebeleland South:  | 084-22631  |
| Midlands:         | 054-220084 | Masvingo:            | 039-262097 |
| Mashonaland West: | 067-22741  |                      |            |