How to tell a child or teenager they have HIV?

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Right to Care
Disclosure Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in the context of HIV, TB and non-communicable diseases

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Skills Building Session

When?  
Who?  
How?  
What to say?
Learn about HIV at school

HIV myths and stigma

Sexually active

Figure out their HIV status

Young children may disclose irrationally

Positive HIV information

When

Positive HIV information

Sexually active

Figure out their HIV status

Young children may disclose irrationally

When

Positive HIV information
Who

P&CGs

- Ideal according to adolescents
- Scared of blame
- Scared of disclosing their own status
- Scared of making their child sad or depressed
- Don’t have all the information
- Can’t answer questions
- Can’t practice

HCWs

+ Can be trained
+ Should have all the right information
+ Should support the parents
- Can be intimidating
- Adolescents think the HCWs don’t know what it’s like to be HIV+

HIV + peer supporters

+ Can disclose their own status
+ Can be trained
+ Should have all the right information
- Adolescent could be angry about the set up
- ethics around telling a peer their status
Who

P&CGs

HCWs

HIV + peer supporters

Ideal

P&CGs supported by HCWs
And support from someone who has HIV
(parent/HCW/peer)
How

Counsel P&CGs

- Prepare them for disclosure from the beginning
- Ask about their concerns
- Allay their fears
- Let them talk to other P&CGs who have disclosed
- Get consent
- IEC materials on FAQs

Process

- Partial disclosure
- Full disclosure
- Post disclosure
- Ongoing disclosure and support
- Support groups and peer supporters
- Record progress in the file

HCWs

- Build a trusting relationship
- Private space – confidentiality
- Comfortable room
- Remove physical barriers
- Be confident and make eye-contact
- "Do not disturb" sign on the door
- Can kick the P/CGs out but never the child or adolescent
- Give IEC material to read at home
- Bwise website
What to say

- Young children may disclose irrationally
- Learn about HIV at school
- HIV myths and stigma
- Figure out their HIV status
- Sexually active

HIV status
Partial Disclosure Example
White Blood Cells = Soldiers
What does the soldier do if it finds a germ in the body?
Few White Blood Cells = Few Soldiers
Few soldiers = many germs
Many germs = person gets sick
Medicine makes your soldiers strong
Partial Disclosure

“You were born with a germ that kills your soldiers”

“That germ is a virus”

“Today we’re going to talk about the name of your virus”
BUT if you suspect they have heard of HIV already
You need to give positive information to dispel the negative myths and stigma

Play a Game: Guess the infection

Name an infection

flu
TB
HIV

What do you know about it?

Do you think you have it?
If you have HIV it doesn’t mean you were promiscuous.

People with HIV can live long healthy lives if they take medicine.

People with HIV can do whatever they want.

If you take medicine every day your partner won’t get HIV or your baby.

We didn’t have such good medicine in those days.

HIV is so common, anyone can get it.
Summary

• Important to convey all the positive information about HIV
• Process
• Strive to set up clinics to disclose in an ideal way
• Need to be flexible and adjust the process for non-ideal situations
• Each adolescent and situation is different
• Be brave and spearhead the disclosure process
• Share methods that work

“I wish I knew earlier...”
Thank you

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