



William

Facts about HIV and social support

- Having support from family and friends can be very helpful when dealing with your diagnoses.
- Peer-support from other people living with HIV can give you the motivation to empower yourself.
- Disclosure should be your own choice, but some countries have laws on disclosing your HIV status to others.
- Stigma can be a barrier to not talk about your status, but try and find someone who you can trust.
- Social support can be your friend, partner, close family but also your neighbour, or other person living with HIV.

The rising of me

Nowadays people living with HIV can have a good and healthy life. Having support from friends and family is key to create a sustainable healthy life.

When I was growing up I did not know that I was born with HIV. At a tender age, both my parents passed away because of AIDS related illnesses. At the age of six, my mom died. A few years passed and then my dad followed her. By that time I was 10 years of age.

I used to fall sick every time. Doctors treated me several times for different illnesses but they never knew what the cause of these illnesses were. Until one day they decided to test me for HIV. I was diagnosed with HIV in 2008 at the age of 14.

Before I was diagnosed, I used to stay with my stepmom. At that time she was my caretaker. One day a lady came to our home and told my stepmom that there is a new organization in Kasangati (my home town) and they were offering free health care services. She told her that if she had some time she should take me there so they can find what's bothering me and why I keep getting sick. She refused to do so. But her little sister told me to go.

So, that's what I did. I took myself to the clinic (Kawempe Home Care). Upon arriving there, they asked me for my caretaker. I told them she refused to come along with me. The organization told me that without a caretaker they couldn't help me. Luckily enough I found a caring and loving lady (Madam Joyce) who acted as my aunt. She went to the clinic with me and they drew blood samples from me. After some waiting my results came back, but unfortunately, the results turned to be positive for HIV. I was shocked, and wept. Madam Joyce held me and I was happy she was there to comfort me, as I cried.

Although I was comforted by Madam Joyce, I was still worried about how I was going to face my stepmom when I got back home. At first I kept silent when I got back, because I was afraid to tell her. However, some time passed and I got the confidence to tell her, which I did. Sadly after telling her things got worse. I developed more self-stigma and I thought of committing suicide.

To cut a long story short, I have dealt with a lot of challenges in my lifetime. But if I learned one thing, it is to turn my challenges into great opportunities. It took me some time but at one point I realized that having HIV is one of those challenges that I can use in my advantage. It gave me an opportunity to shine and support others who go through the same thing. That's the reason I chose to come out publicly with my HIV and start fighting for the rights of all people living with HIV and those affected by the virus. And as for now, I'm proud of the person I've become today and I can't forget to thank all those who have stood by my side during the most difficult time in my life. The list is endless, and I'm so grateful. I've risen above, proudly.

Hiv Vereniging

The Dutch Association of People Living with HIV (Hiv Vereniging) represents the interests of all people with HIV in the Netherlands, irrespective of background.

We provide information about living with HIV and organise all kinds of meet-ups.

Servicepunt

Our team of expert volunteers can be contacted for any question about living with HIV, by telephone on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 – 22:00 hrs, or by email: servicepunt@hivvereniging.nl.

See www.hivvereniging.nl