

HIV

CONVERSATION GUIDE

HOW
IT'S
VIEWED

Talking about HIV.
Breaking down stigma.



How you talk about HIV matters. Certain words can either empower or stigmatize people living with HIV. The language we use often does not reflect the current science or the ways that people living with HIV feel about themselves. Reducing stigma can help reduce HIV transmission by increasing disclosure and encouraging HIV testing.

“People-first language” is one way of reducing stigma because it puts the person before the illness or medical condition. Here are some guidelines.¹



WORDS MATTER.

DON'T say^{1,2}

DO say^{1,2}

HIV/AIDS

HIV & AIDS

HIV-infected

Person living with HIV

AIDS virus or HIV virus

HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis not a virus)

Full-blown AIDS

AIDS or Stage 3 HIV

Victims, sufferers, contaminated, sick

People living with HIV

Transsexual, tranny or
transgendered, shemale or he-she

Transgender man or transgender
woman, person of trans experience

Body fluids

Only some transmit HIV
(blood, amniotic fluid, semen,
pre-ejaculate, vaginal/rectal fluids,
breast milk)

AIDS Patient, HIV Patient

Person with AIDS,
Person living with HIV

To Catch AIDS, to contract AIDS, to
catch HIV, to infect with HIV

Diagnosed with AIDS,
transmit HIV



Conversation Scenarios

These scenarios and guidance are offered only as suggestions to help reduce HIV stigma.^{3,4}

How to talk about HIV with friends

Whether you have HIV or not, talking about HIV with friends is a way to build trust, support, and understanding. These are the keys to reducing stigma. Starting with a small anecdote can help set the tone and make everyone feel comfortable.

CONVERSATION 1:

How to talk with a group of friends, who may not all know that one among the group is living with HIV

State your support for those living with HIV. Be prepared with the facts and share them in a kind way. Try to maintain a calm, nonjudgmental tone. Set a physical tone of acceptance with a hug when appropriate.

CONVERSATION 2:

How to talk about HIV with family

Talking with family about HIV can be scary. Family members may have different levels of knowledge about HIV, as well as varying perspectives. Be clear and direct about your support for people living with HIV.



CONVERSATION 3:

How to talk about HIV with coworkers

Choosing to discuss HIV with your coworkers, or not, is 100% your choice. You may want to check your HR policy to make sure LGBTQ people are protected at your company. Part of HIV stigma still includes an incorrect association with LGBTQ.

CONVERSATION 4:

How to talk about HIV with people you feel safe with

As you open up about HIV, it's likely that friends may come to you with questions. Be prepared to share your honest feelings and how you address any fears you have. Learning the basics about HIV will be very helpful for this type of conversation, but sharing your own experiences becomes just as important as you build your network of friends who are compassionate toward people living with HIV.

CONVERSATION 5:

How to tell people you are living with HIV

When you are living with HIV, but have not told anyone, or are LGBTQ living with HIV, and have not come out yet, the situation is undoubtedly scary and difficult. Consider practicing your conversations with a licensed therapist who has experience in counseling people living with HIV. Consider starting with coming out to a close friend first. It will be helpful to have professional support before and after these conversations.

References:

1. HIV and Language. POZ. <https://www.poz.com/basics/hiv-basics/hiv-language>. Accessed February 21, 2020.
2. Cdc.gov. (2020). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/stophivtogether/pdf/campaigns/lshst/c-dc-hiv-together-stigma-talking-guide.pdf> Accessed 21 Feb. 2020
3. By: HIV.gov | Published: March 25 2019. HIV Stigma in Focus at Closing Session of CDC's National HIV Prevention Conference. HIV.gov. <https://www.hiv.gov/blog/hiv-stigma-focus-closing-session-cdc-s-national-hiv-prevention-conference>. Published March 27, 2019. Accessed February 21, 2020.
4. Educate Others About HIV Stigma. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/stophivtogether/campaigns/hiv-stigma/educate-others/index.html>. Published September 10, 2019. Accessed February 21, 2020.