

# 5

## Deciding whether to get tested for HIV



45 mins.

### OBJECTIVE(S)

- Knowledge: To understand the consequences of HIV testing.
- Skills: To learn to make an informed and thoughtful decision about seeking VCT.

### TEACHING METHOD

- Brainstorming, Group discussion

### MATERIALS

- 1 sheet of paper per participant
- slips of paper
- 1 box / container to hold anonymous decisions
- pencils / writing utensils

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### LESSON PLAN

#### Making your decision

1. Introduce the lesson:

“Now that we have considered our own risk of HIV infection (Lesson 1), learned about voluntary counselling and testing (Lessons 2 & 3), and thought about the advantages and disadvantages of getting tested (Lesson 4), you can consider whether you wish to seek counselling and testing. You don’t have to rush into making a decision about getting tested for HIV. Take your time to think about it carefully, as it is a personal and important decision. Here are some steps that can help you make the best decision for you...”
2. Tell the participants:

“Take a piece of paper and write down the options you face today, leaving space below each. You have at least three options to choose from:

  - (1) Ignore the issue of counselling and testing for HIV;
  - (2) Do not get tested, but avoid all risky behaviours from now on;
  - (3) Get tested - it’s time to know your status.
3. Ask the participants if they can think of other options to add to this list.
4. Below each option, ask the participants to write down 3-5 possible consequences, both for themselves and for other people in their life, if they were to choose that option. In other words, what might happen if they choose Option 1? Option 2? Option 3?

5. Now lead a discussion by asking participants to share what they have written. Discuss each option and the possible consequences.

Ask them to identify any subsequent decisions they may face depending on which option they choose. (for example, If they choose Option 1, will they always use condoms from now on? What if they enter a new relationship? What if they wish to have children later?)

6. Explain that thinking through the consequences of their decisions -- especially how their choices will affect their life and their friends' and family's -- can help them make a thoughtful decision. It can also help them prepare for the consequences.
7. As part of the discussion, ask the participants to brainstorm about possible things that they may need to think about or prepare in advance if they choose to get tested for HIV. Make sure that the following points are covered, especially the issue of informing sexual partners.

- "If you choose to get tested for HIV, what are some things that you may need to prepare for or think about in advance?"

Examples:

- Deciding if you wish to be counselled alone or with somebody else, like a partner, parent, or friend.
- Thinking about the effects the result of the test will have on your life and the lives of others.
- Planning how you will cope if the test result is positive.

- "It is important to consider the issue of informing your sexual partner(s) and other people about your test result. What are some of the things that you may need to consider before informing others of your status?"

Examples:

- Deciding who you will share the result with by considering who can be trusted to keep the result private. Who will be supportive and understanding? (e.g. your partner? friends? parents? siblings? close relatives?)
- Considering situations in which sharing a positive status may put you at risk. (e.g. Is there a chance someone will be critical or even abusive? Is it possible that you will face discrimination at work? Or with insurance companies?)
- Deciding how you will share the result. (e.g., Privately, by yourself? Ask a counsellor, friend or religious person to disclose the result on your behalf?)

8. Reinforce that it is their decision if they want to tell others the result, but explain that sharing their HIV status with their sexual partner(s) can help them to make informed choices and protect each other's health. Remind them that pre-test counselling helps to prepare them for accepting the test results and sharing it with their sexual partner(s).

9. You may want to encourage participants to do role plays of different situations. For example: a) telling your status to your partner; b) convincing your partner to get tested; and c) telling your parents or other family member about your status.

10. Ask the participants to write down their decision about getting tested for HIV:

“Now that we have reviewed different options, possible consequences, and issues to consider before getting tested for HIV, think about Voluntary Counselling and Testing, and consider what your own decision might be. Write your decision on a slip of paper without including your name; fold it and put it into the box. The anonymous decisions will be tallied and we will discuss the results.”

Aggregate the anonymous decisions, share the results with the participants, and discuss why some options were chosen more often than others. Since consequences often create fears, try to address and assuage the participants’ fears in the discussion. Identify issues that may need further discussion and activities to motivate the participants to seek voluntary counselling and testing for HIV.

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## SOURCE

- Action with Youth. HIV/AIDS and STD: A training manual for young people. Second Edition. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2000. <http://www.ifrc.org>
- “Guidelines for Counselling Children who are Infected with HIV or Affected by HIV and AIDS”, *HIV Counselling Series No 7*, Southern African AIDS Training Programme, Zimbabwe, & CIDA, January 2003.
- Horizons Program, Kenya Project Partners, Uganda Project Partners. *HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing among Youth: Results from an Exploratory Study in Nairobi, Kenya, and Kampala and Masaka, Uganda*. Washington, DC: Population Council 2001.
- “What to expect from Counselling and Testing”, pamphlet produced by the New Start Counselling and Testing Centres, coordinated by the Zimbabwe Ministry of Health and Child Welfare and Population Services International Zimbabwe.

## Teacher/Facilitator reflection

- How effective do you think the lesson was in terms of:
  - Participation of all students?
  - The pitch or level of the lesson matching the students’ abilities/interests?
  - Achieving the learning objectives?
- How comfortable were you with the content and methods?
- How did you adapt the lesson for your students & local situation?
- Other reflections: