

Myths and Stereotypes Regarding Persons Infected with HIV

Content

- Exploring myths and stereotypes regarding persons infected with HIV
- Examining the impact of HIV infection on individual and family life

Instructional Objectives

By the end of this lesson, each student will be able to...

1. Describe the impact of HIV/AIDS on individual and family life.
2. Identify myths or stereotypes regarding persons infected with HIV.
3. Express compassion/concern for persons with disabilities or illness, including those infected with HIV.

Materials Needed

1. Educational video of a person living with HIV/STDs.
2. Blank cards (4 per student).
3. Loss activity overhead transparency.
4. (Optional) PLWA guest speaker.

Related Vocabulary

PLWA (Person Living With AIDS)
PWA (Person With AIDS)

Part A

Lesson Introduction: Educational Video of a Person Infected or Affected by HIV/AIDS (25 minutes)

Note: Remind students of ground rules, emphasizing confidentiality, and respect for differences.

Pre-post question #15:
You can tell if someone is infected with HIV and other STDs just by looking at them (false).

1. Briefly introduce the video or speaker, stressing the importance of listening carefully in the class today. (See "Tips for Using Positive Speakers," page 22.)
2. At the end of the presentation, **ask students what they heard the speaker saying** about what it's like to have HIV.

Pre-post question #16:
Persons infected with HIV or other STDs still need to protect themselves from being re-exposed to HIV and other STDs (true).

Invite student questions, particularly those emphasizing how infected persons and their friends/family members **feel**. Also, what myths and stereotypes did they see or hear?

Part B

Loss Activity (estimated time: 20 minutes)

Concept

After each student identifies a special personal attribute, skill, person and plan in his or her life, he/she sees and feels the impact of losing them due to illness and death.

1. Prepare four small cards or strips of paper for each student (or ask students to tear their own).
2. Using the overhead transparency as a guide, direct students to write the following four items, one item per card or slip of paper:
 - A special **personal trait** they possess (nice hair, clear skin, muscles, sense of humor, body part, etc.)
 - A **special skill** they possess (dancing, sports, typing, singing, etc.)
 - The name of a **special person** in their life, who is currently living
 - A **future plan** which they look forward to (e.g., summer vacation at the beach, graduating from high school, getting a job, getting their license, etc.)
3. Ask students to shuffle their cards, and randomly drop one on the desk or floor in front of them.
4. Ask students to look at their cards, and to think about which one they just "lost." How would it feel to no longer have this in their life? Invite students to share their feelings.
5. Ask students to shuffle their remaining three cards, and again drop one on the desk or floor in front of them. How would it feel to lose this one? Invite students to share their thoughts and responses.
6. Finally, ask students to hold their two remaining cards in front of them, and have a partner *take one away*. How would it feel to lose this one? Invite students to share their thoughts and responses.

**PERSONAL
TRAIT**

**SPECIAL
SKILL**

**SPECIAL
PERSON**

**FUTURE
PLAN**

Note: Some teachers create a "tribute wall" (bulletin board) displaying the words, affect, respect and protect on the board.

The students are then invited to write the initials of a person on whom HIV has had an affect, or someone they respect for staying HIV free, or someone they will protect in some way from infection.

Explain that this exercise resembles the situation which many HIV infected persons experience — loss of people, loss of plans.

7. Ask students what they can *personally do to prevent* becoming HIV infected? As a student gives an appropriate response, permit them to pick up their cards.
8. Ask students to recall the good feelings they had thinking about their special attributes, their skills, special people and events, and how sad or angry they would feel if these things were unnecessarily taken from them.
9. Remind them that HIV disease robs people of these things, and that people living with HIV have experienced many of these losses. Challenge them to be careful, and to be compassionate toward others who have experienced such losses.
10. Create or review ground rules from the Getting Started Lesson.

Part C

Lesson Wrap-up

1. Praise the students for their interest and participation in today's lesson regarding persons and families affected by HIV/AIDS.
2. Announce that the next lesson will examine the AIDS epidemic, including how HIV is and is not spread.

END OF LESSON

Classroom Enrichment Activities:

- Write a journal or mind map entry about how they feel about today's presentation and activity.
- Write a question for the Question Box.

Family/Home Assignments:

- Write a letter to a friend or family member who has recently experienced a loss (see teacher's note).
- Encourage students to discuss their responses to today's speaker (or video presentation) with their parent(s) or supervising adult(s).
- Discuss how their family or living unit would handle loss.

Note: Remind students that they do not actually have to mail the letter unless they really want to. Letters should be reviewed by a parent or teacher before being sent.

Opportunities for Cross Curriculum Integration:

- Social Studies: Identify the contributions of disabled persons throughout history.
- Social Studies: Review the protection that the Americans with Disabilities Act provides PLWAs.
- Social Studies: List the prominent people who have died of AIDS.
- English: Read Ryan White's autobiography "My Own Story."

Tips for Using Positive Speakers:

WHAT TO DO BEFORE A PRESENTATION

1. Introduce the presenter by first name only. Inform students that they are going to hear a speaker that will provide some information today. Note: The presenter will reveal their personal status with HIV at a critical part of the presentation. In other words, even if you know, don't reveal the HIV status of the presenter when you introduce the person.
2. At the conclusion of the question and answer session, thank, then excuse the presenter.
3. Please process the presentation with the students immediately after the speaker has left the room.

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE PRESENTATION

1. Positive speaker presentations often evoke a wide range of emotions making it vitally important to allow time at the end of class for students to share their feelings. Use the questions below as a discussion. Feel free to add additional questions that may relate to other classroom topics.

"What feelings, or impressions did you experience during the presentation?"

"What parts of the presentations were most meaningful or most surprising to you?"

"Has hearing the story of individuals living with HIV/AIDS helped you understand some of the ways to avoid or reduce HIV risk behaviors?"