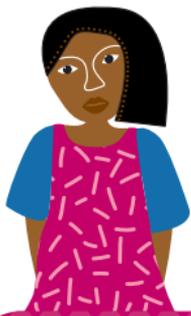


Stigma and self-stigma





This leaflet is about stigma and how as a CATS/ peer supporter you can help people to deal with stigma and self- stigma

HIV related STIGMA is negative attitudes and abuse directed at people living with HIV.

HIV related DISCRIMINATION is the unfair treatment of someone living with HIV, for example a school refusing admission to a child living with HIV.

HIV related self-stigma occurs when people internalise the stigma and negative attitudes of others around HIV which can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth.

Stigma comes from ignorance. It is linked to people not understanding the facts of HIV and having gaps in their knowledge. Myths about HIV, fear and negative attitudes, result in rejection or exclusion of a person based on their HIV status.

Worrying about stigma and discrimination from others can prevent people from talking about HIV and can leave people very isolated. There is strong evidence that stigma and the fear of being judged or treated poorly keeps people from accessing HIV and other health services.

Some people have tackled experiences of stigma and discrimination by gradually **sharing with people who are trusted and who have had the same experiences**, people who can empathise and relate to each other.' These relationships can support people dealing with anxiety around the reactions of others and offer opportunities for practical problem solving.



Finding ways to help someone who experiences self-stigma around HIV is not easy, especially if they continue to be exposed to other people's negative attitudes. The key is finding ways for people living with HIV to feel supported and able to build resilience or coping strategies to manage the negative attitudes of others. Giving space to talk and share experiences can be helpful, as well as supporting people to know their rights and educating and informing others about HIV.

What CATS/ peer supporters can do for people experiencing stigma



You can be a **trusted ear**; someone to talk to about stigma and rejection.

You can share **your own experiences** and strategies.

You can help young people to **reflect on whose opinion matters** and what is the truth.

You have regular contact with people and so you can **recognise when people are finding things very difficult** and need additional support to cope with stigma.

You can **signpost them to other resources**, such as support groups, to help them tackle self-isolation and make sure they stay in touch with services and support

As CATS/peer supporters you can provide personal support to talk about those feelings and ways to consider different perspectives and think positively. There is evidence that daily activities to find positives can change the outlook of our minds and doing it regularly can help change the way we view ourselves, our strengths and our abilities.

Practising positive statements

can be used to challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts. Creating strong positive statements that recognise strengths and achievements and saying them out loud each day has been shown to increase self-esteem and reduce stress.

TODAY IS GOING TO BE A GOOD DAY

LIFE IS WHAT I MAKE IT

I NEVER GIVE UP



WRITING DOWN THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR

Expressing gratitude or thanks helps people recognise the positive things in their lives and helps them disconnect from negative emotions. Each day writing down 3 things you are grateful for can provide examples of many positive feelings and experiences over time. The practice has been shown to help people manage negative thoughts and to train their brain to look for positives.



What CATS/peer supporters can do to help people challenge self-stigma

- Help young people to **identify people who are positive and supportive** in their lives and encourage them to spend more time with them.
- Help them recognise their own negative thoughts and voices and help **them find positive statements** about their strengths.
- Help them to **ignore the negative voices** and messages from others and to focus on those of people who support and care for them.
- You are an important role model who can **demonstrate positive thinking**, being in control of your thoughts and demonstrating self-belief



READY+ aims to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), psychological wellbeing, care and treatment with, by and for 30,000 adolescents and young people living with HIV in Mozambique, eSwatini, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The programme is being implemented by an innovative and multi-disciplinary consortium of youth, SRHR, HIV and communication partners. READY+ is one of a portfolio of projects being implemented under the READY programme.

For more information, visit <https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/ready/>