

“DON’T HAVE CHILDREN”



OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Discuss the stigma that is perpetuated against PLHAs who chose to have children
- Explore the conflicting stigmas faced by women who are HIV positive



TIME

2 hours

ACTIVITIES

Brainstorming

PLHAs HAVING CHILDREN— POPULAR BELIEFS

Ask participants to brainstorm things people say about HIV positive women and men to stop them having children:

THINGS PEOPLE SAY

- If a woman is HIV positive, she cannot bear children.
- If she is HIV positive, she will miscarry or the baby will be still born.
- If a woman is HIV positive and gets pregnant, it is a big strain on the immune system and she will die much quicker.
- PLHAs who have children are being selfish.
- It is not fair to the children.
- Children will be orphans when their parents die.



In pairs discuss:

- How do these things make you feel?
- What can we do to cope with these attitudes?

Cardstorm

HAVING CHILDREN VS NOT HAVING CHILDREN

Often women living with HIV/AIDS are caught between two stigmas—those of being judged if they chose to have children and the stigma of not having children which in many cultures is very great. The choices are not easy.

NOT HAVING CHILDREN: EXAMPLES OF STIGMA

Society does not see me as a woman. There is no one to look after me when I am ill or old. People keep asking me: "Why don't you have kids?" Or they say, I am useless because I have no children. If you have no children, your partner leaves you. Pressure from relatives to have children. My name is not used to name a relative's child for fear that my situation (childlessness) will be passed on. Fear of looking and behaving different (not having children).



Hand out the cards and ask participants to make a list of the reasons for and against having children if you are positive.

Summary

- Having children brings difficult decisions for those of us who live with HIV and AIDS. Most of us think carefully before planning a child.
- Women face double stigmas and a no win situation.
- The pressure on us all—men and women—to have children is great and for many of us children bring great joy and help us to live longer.

EXAMPLES

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Joy of having children ■ Child may be HIV negative ■ If Nivarapine available risk is lowered ■ Pride in having children ■ Passing on one's name ■ Seals your marriage ■ Proving that you are normal ■ Satisfying cultural expectations ■ Not being called "barren" by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child may be HIV positive and die early ■ Pain of seeing the child die. ■ Guilt of passing HIV to one's child ■ Drain in family resources ■ Getting sick and not being able to look after child ■ Deciding what to do about breastfeeding