

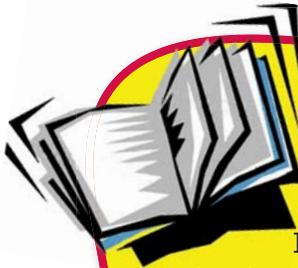
23. Stigma



Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- Define stigma.
- Give examples of stigma.
- List ways to fight stigma.



Background notes

Stigma is when we think people are bad because of a condition they have. Stigma can be in our thoughts, comments, gossip, name-calling, actions, and excluding people. It causes people to feel bad, isolated, alone, guilty, or ashamed. We are all involved in stigmatizing, even if we do not realize it. Stigma hurts people with HIV and AIDS and those suspected of having HIV. Stigma is harmful to ourselves, our families, and communities. We can make a difference by changing our own thinking and actions.

We stigmatize when:

- We call people names.
- Think badly about people.
- Say bad things about people.
- We do not let people participate in activities.
- We do not involve people in making decisions.

Stigma causes people to:

- Feel alone, rejected, condemned, forgotten, useless.
- Be kicked out of family, house, work, or organizations.
- Drop out from school.
- Feel depressed, want to commit suicide, drink alcohol, or use drugs.

Examples of stigma:

- Feeling disrespected or unloved.
- Blaming people who are infected and telling them they deserve it.
- Feeling ashamed because one has HIV/AIDS or TB.
- Feeling afraid to tell others that you have a disease or infection.



Session guide

1. Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
 - What is stigma?
 - What are examples of stigma?
 - What can we do to change stigma?
2. After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section.



Main messages

- Stigma is when we think people are bad because of a condition they have.
- Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.



Activity: Understanding stigma

1. Ask group members to sit on their own away from others. Then say: “Think about a time in your life when you felt alone or rejected for being seen to be different from others—or when you saw other people treated this way.” Explain that this does not need to be examples of HIV stigma—it could be being seen as different for any reason. Ask them to think about—“What happened? How did it feel? What impact did it have on you?”
2. Ask group members: “Think about a time in your life when you isolated or rejected other people because they were different.” Ask them to think about—“What happened? How did you feel? What was your attitude? How did you behave?”
3. Ask group members to share some of their thoughts and feelings from when they were thinking back on being rejected or rejecting others.

Activity: Hospital visit

1. Ask participants to imagine that they are going to visit a hospital. They have each been asked to make a "Get Well Soon" card for an AIDS patient. Explain that some of the patients got HIV through sexual activity with prostitutes or adultery, some from their mothers when they were born, some through a blood transfusion, and others from being raped.
2. Ask each group member to make up a name for the patient they want to make a card for and to decide how their patient got HIV. Ask each group to draw a picture of their card and write a message inside for their patient.
3. When they have finished, ask group members if they have ever heard about people with HIV and AIDS being treated badly. Ask:
 - What are some examples of how people have been treated? Do you think this is the right way to treat people?
 - Why do you think people treat people with HIV and AIDS that way?
 - How do you like to be treated by your friends? Family? Neighbours? Teachers? Community? Should everyone be treated this way or only certain people?
4. Ask group members to think about their cards.
 - Who did they make their cards for?
 - Did they think about how a person became infected when making the card?
 - Did they feel differently about patients who were infected through their mothers compared with those who were infected from sexual activity with prostitutes?
5. Use the information in the Background Notes to have a discussion with the group on stigma. Ask group members to think about what they can do to fight stigma in their community.

24. Managing stress



Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

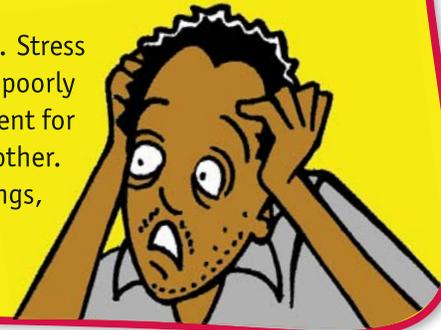
- List ways to reduce stress.
- Explain how to deal with stress.



Background notes

The word stress is used to describe feelings of tension, worry, and strain. People feel stress every day and stress can be healthy. Sometimes, though, stress can be too much. During adolescence, we have to make many decisions, like what we plan to do in the future, if we are going to have sexual intercourse, or trying to develop an identity, which can all be stressful.

Too much stress can affect your physical and mental well-being. Stress can make people feel badly about themselves, cause people to do poorly in school, and make people question their ability. Stress is different for everyone. What is relaxing for one person may be stressful to another. When you are under stress you may experience the following feelings, thoughts, behaviours, or physical symptoms:



Feelings	Thoughts	Behaviours	Physical symptoms
Worried Anger Fear Moodiness Embarrassment	Thinking badly about self Difficulty concentrating or making decisions Forgetfulness Worry about the future Thinking the same thing over and over Fear of failure	Difficulty speaking Crying Doing things without thinking Yelling at friends/family Grinding teeth Jaw tightening Smoking, alcohol, or other drug use Having accidents Increased or decreased appetite	Tight muscles Cold or sweaty hands Headaches Back or neck problems Trouble sleeping Stomach aches More colds (homa) & infections Tired Rapid breathing Pounding heart Shaking hands Dry mouth



Session guide

1. Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
 - What is stress?
 - How can you avoid feeling stressed?
 - What can you do to feel better when you are stressed?
2. After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section and the tips for stress management on the next page.



Main points

- It is normal to feel stressed at times, though too much stress can be harmful.
- There are things that can be done to prevent feeling stressed and ways to feel better when you are stressed.

Tips for stress management

There are many ways to manage unhealthy stress. Everyone needs to find ways that work best for them. Here are some ideas that might help:

1. **Focus on your breathing.** Breathe in deeply through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in so your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count as you breathe out slowly.
2. **Talk.** When you feel stressed, try to express your feelings. Keeping feelings inside can increase stress. Share your feelings. Perhaps a friend, family member, teacher, or religious leader can help you see your problem in a new way. Talking with someone else can help clear your mind. Even if it is embarrassing, asking for help soon after a problem happens may prevent serious problems later.
3. **Take a “minute” holiday.** Imagine a quiet place in your mind. You cannot always run away, but you can dream. When you have the chance, take a moment to close your eyes and think about a place where you feel relaxed and comfortable.
4. **Be comfortable.** Be as comfortable as the situation will allow. Wear comfortable clothing. If it's too hot, go somewhere where it's not. If your chair is uncomfortable, move. Do not wait until your discomfort turns into a real problem.
5. **Move around.** Physical activity can help reduce and prevent stress. Being a student involves a lot of sitting, and sitting around can mean letting stress build up in your body. When you feel worried, angry, or bad, exercising can help you feel better.

Try to find something you enjoy and make regular time for it. Running, walking, or dancing can be done anywhere. Remember, your body and mind work together.

6. **Take care of your body.** Healthy eating and getting enough sleep give your mind energy as well as your body. Avoid eating too much caffeine and sugar.
7. **Laugh.** Look for things that make you laugh, including yourself. Share jokes and funny stories with your friends. Laughter is good for you!
8. **Plan ahead.** Make a list of what you have to do, then do one thing at a time, crossing them off when you finish. Do the most important ones first. If you have to do something you do not want to do, do it early in the day and get it over with; the rest of your day will be less stressful.
9. **Know your limits.** When in a stressful situation, ask yourself: is this my problem? If it isn't, leave it alone. If it is, can you solve it now? Once the problem is settled, leave it alone. Try to accept situations you cannot change. If a problem is beyond your control and cannot be changed at the moment, don't fight the situation. Learn to accept what is, for now, until such time when you can change things.
10. **Must you always be right?** If you seem to get angry when things don't go your way try cooperation, not fighting. It may help everyone feel better.
11. **Cry.** Crying during stressful times can be a healthy way to bring relief to your stress, and may prevent a headache or other physical problem from stress. However, if you are crying every day it could mean there is a problem and you should talk to an adult about it.
12. **Look for the good things around you.** It is easy to see only the bad things when you are stressed. Try to find five good things around you. These may seem like small events but as these good things add up they can help you begin to see things in a new, more balanced way.



Activity: Meditation

1. Choose a quiet place with room for everyone to sit.
2. Explain that meditation is one way to help reduce stress. There are many different types of meditation, but all of them have the same purpose – clear our minds. Meditation can be done anywhere at any time. It can be done alone or as a group.
3. Explain that today we can practice breathing meditation as a group. Read the following instructions:
 - Sit in a comfortable position. You can sit cross-legged on the floor or in any other position that is comfortable. Or if you wish, you can sit in a chair. The most important thing is to keep our back straight to prevent us from becoming sleepy.
 - Take deep breaths, and breathe out forcefully through your mouth a couple times.
 - Close your eyes half way and think about your breathing. Breathe slowly, through your nose and out through your mouth.

Think about how the breath feels as it enters and leaves your mouth. Try to concentrate on this feeling and not think about anything else.
 - Your stomach should be moving out more than or the same as your chest. Check this by placing one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach while breathing. Both your chest and your stomach should move. You should feel your stomach go out as you breathe in.
 - When you breathe out, imagine that all your stress is leaving your body. Try not to think about anything other than your breath.
 - At first, your mind will be very busy. There will be a temptation to think about all the different thoughts that come into your head, but try to stay focused on how your breath feels. If you discover that your mind has wandered and is thinking about other thoughts, return to thinking about your breath.
4. After you have read the instructions, allow group members to sit quietly and continue thinking about their breathing in silence for at least 10 minutes.
5. After they have finished meditating, ask group members to share their feelings about the meditation.
 - How do you feel?
 - Was it difficult to focus on your breathing? Why?
 - Do you think this would help you when you are feeling stressed?