



# ACTIVITY TWO: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

MAKI'S STORY  
JODY'S STORY

## Activity Two - First impressions

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- By the end of the session, participants will
- have found out more about what it is like to live with HIV
  - have explored and considered feelings and emotions of those living with HIV

### MATERIALS

Paper  
Pens  
'STILL IGNORING IT' DVD  
Post-its, flip chart paper titled 'Ask Catherine'  
copies of Maki's story and Jody's story

Start the session by watching Catherine's story. Explain to the group that it is a very moving story, and can be quite emotional to watch, but the content is extremely informative and inspirational in many ways.

Ask the group to work in pairs to discuss the following:

- Your feelings after watching the film
- Catherine's attitude to life in the early days, and to life now
- The biggest challenges Catherine had to face
- The day to day challenges Catherine faces
- The way Catherine manages relationships
- The law and HIV
- What Catherine is proud about
- What advice she gives to young people.
- If you could speak to Catherine about what she has shared with us, or ask her a question, what would you say? Write your question or comment on a Post-it and stick it on the 'Ask Catherine' flipchart.

Distribute copies of Maki's story and Jody's story. Read both of the stories to the group.

Ask pairs to join up into groups of 6.  
Ask each group to decide on one member playing the role of Maki's or Jody's best friend.

The following scenario is outlined – Maki's/Jody's "best friend" has just learned that Maki/Jody is HIV positive (group to decide how they've been told and by whom – e.g by Maki/Jody themselves, by other friends, by rumour). The other members of the group take the role of reporters for a youth radio programme doing a show about reactions to HIV. They are interviewing Maki's/Jody's friend for the programme. Their task is to ask Maki's/Jody's friend questions for the broadcast.

#### Example questions include;

- What was your first reaction to the news?
- Are you going to stick by them?
- Are you worried about catching HIV from them?
- Are you going to tell anybody else?
- How could you help them to find out about help-lines they can call if they want advice?

When groups have finished the interview ask them to consider what issues came out. Discuss as a whole group.

### ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

Repeat this activity, whereby one of you is the parent of Maki/Jody. Other options could be a sister/brother, work colleague or teacher.

How could you help a friend who told you something serious and personal about themselves?

### MAKI'S STORY

#### Living under the shadow of HIV

My name is Maki. I am a Muslim living in the North West of England. I work in the computer management field.

I was happy. My world was perfect, surrounded by family members and friends. As many young people would probably do the same thing, I was living life to its fullest. Driving nice cars, going on a nice holiday, night clubs, everything as any young people would do: more than anything experimenting with a lot of things such as smoking cannabis, occasional drinks with friends etc.

A few years ago, I was in India on a holiday-cum-business trip. I got involved in unprotected sexual activities, without realising that this would change my life. It was a matter of time before I contracted HIV. I still remember how easy it was for the doctor to say, "I am afraid you are HIV positive". I was absolutely devastated to put it very, very lightly. Enormous confusion, fear and I almost lost my senses. I could not work it out how this could happen to me.

No matter how hard you try to hide things but within the Asian community, due to its cultural framework, news got leaked to my family members and friends. Further to my shock and horror, some of my family members and friends abandoned me.

There has been a difficult period of fear and loneliness. I simply could not find anyone to talk to about how I feel and what I should do. It almost became my world and their world; Nothing in common whatsoever. The inner voice was becoming more and more strong asking me that, "why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this"?

I had faith in Allah (God). I became more religious. And this is the beginning of my journey to find out more about myself and coming close to Allah.

One day I met a community member who also happened to be working in the HIV Prevention Unit. I started building a good relationship and trust with him. Eventually, through proper guidance and advice, I began

to pick myself up. I became more confident about myself, and started learning to live with HIV status.

I wish I had a new lease of life. Every morning and night when I am awake, I pray to Allah that I did not have the disease. My Muslim society should learn more about HIV and recognise that there are young people like me who unknowingly acquire HIV, hence more understanding and recognition is needed. I am not a criminal. Anyone can make a mistake.

My message to my fellow young people is, I know for the fact that the mistake I made, I am paying a very heavy price. It's not worth it. Please be careful. Day by day, I realise that life is very, very precious. Look after yourself. Don't let yourself down. I lost my beautiful world. I do not want you losing your beautiful world. Protect yourself. Because, I do not want you to think what I think now, wish I had done this, wish I had done that. But it is too late for me. I am dying every minute, every second, but I want you to live every minute and every second.

### JODY'S STORY

#### Just a normal teenager

When I was fourteen, I was told the reason why I had to keep taking medication – I was, and am, HIV positive. It was my auntie that told me, along with a support worker, Meg. I didn't know what to think, or what to say – it was a massive shock to the system. The first thing I thought was that I was going to die. And I thought it would happen really quickly. I was really scared. I didn't know what I would say to people, or if I could say anything to anyone.

My Mum died when I was six. I learned that this was from AIDS, but no-one told me at the time. Now I know the truth. Even though I'm glad to have been told, I wish my real mother could have been the one to tell me. I feel like I've got a double life a lot of the time. Hardly anyone knows I'm HIV positive. I want to enjoy life as a teenager. I haven't told my boyfriend. I want to tell my best friend, but I've been keeping it a secret because teenagers are very prejudice about HIV. I'm scared that if they find out they might turn away from me and pick on me.

School doesn't help. Sex education is only about pregnancy and how to put a condom on. I don't think any of the other kids know what HIV is – they just treat it as a joke. There should be proper education about it, and adverts on the TV.

If someone says they've got cancer, people are really supportive. But if you say you have HIV people will back away. I've started going to a support group just so I get the chance to talk about it. There are other people there who are in the same situation. I can talk to them about it, and we can support each other. I've made new friends there, but I only see them at the group. I need to keep living my double life, so I can feel normal too. ...because I AM normal. I'm just like everybody else. I didn't do anything wrong, it's just something that happened to me, and that's what I want people to understand. Like other teenagers I love going out with my friends and dancing...when I'm doing stuff like that, I can forget, and there's no-one there to remind me.