

Training HIV health workers

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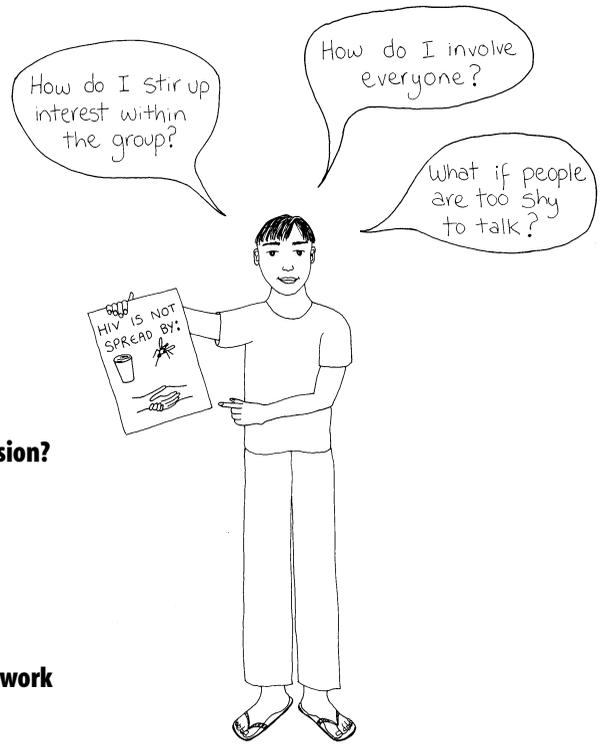
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Phan's story

Phan lives in Vietnam. He is a village health worker who recently took part in a training class on HIV in the nearby capital of Hanoi. He went because people in his village were sick with AIDS and a rumor had spread that the virus was in the village water. Phan did not think HIV could be spread by water, but he was not sure. He wanted to find out the truth.

After he returned from the training, Phan realized that his village needed more people who knew about HIV and AIDS. They would be able to teach others and stop false rumors about the virus. A few people offered to help do

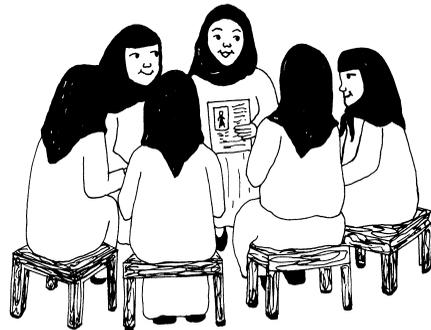
this. Phan has planned a meeting to speak about what he learned in the training class, but he is nervous about leading a group; he has always been more comfortable talking one-on-one. He wonders, “How do I stir up interest within the group? How do I involve everyone, even the people who usually get bored? What if people are too shy to talk about issues like sex and drug use?”

How do we learn?

The best way to learn something is by doing it. Most people learn to farm by working in the fields, instead of by reading about farming in a book. People can also learn from talking with each other, or reading, or hearing the advice of others. This chapter describes different ways to help people learn. It can be used as a guide for training health workers or teaching in the community. You can adapt the ideas in this chapter to meet the needs of your community.

A health worker’s most important task is helping people take control of their health. This is especially true for an HIV health worker because prevention is so important. Training sessions are an important part of this process. The best teachers get people involved and help spark new ideas. They do not confuse people or make them feel stupid for not knowing things or believing things that are not true. Good teachers do not bore people, because when people are bored they will turn away from the chance to learn.

Most of the teaching styles used in formal schooling are based on a teacher telling students what the teacher feels is important to know and then testing them to see if they remember it all. HIV health workers in the Dominican Republic say this is like “pouring water into a sieve instead of a pot.” Many times people do not remember information because they were not interested in



learning it in the first place. Many people have not gone to school and are not used to a one-way flow of facts from “teacher” to “student.” It is said that good teaching is drawing ideas out of students, not putting ideas into them. Sharing information in both directions is a better way for a health worker to teach.

Who will come to your training session?

Before you start your training session, think about who will participate. In some areas of the world, almost everyone has friends or family members with HIV. In these areas, many of the people in your training session will have HIV, and the discussions will be different than in areas where few people have personal connections with people who have the virus. Some people will have been inspired by friends or family with HIV to learn more about caring for people who are ill and preventing the spread of the virus. Others may be health workers, sex workers, or community workers active in HIV issues.

Think about having sessions that include people with similar backgrounds. For example, this could mean having one training group for teenagers, another for women, and another for people who have HIV. People have different reasons for becoming interested in learning more about HIV, and you can ask people to talk about some of these during the training sessions. Having groups made up of people with common backgrounds allows people to speak more freely about issues that they might not feel comfortable talking about in a larger group.

Child-to-child teaching

In many places in the world older children care for their younger sisters and brothers while their parents work. Some care for younger brothers and sisters because their parents have died. Few of them have the time to go to school. These children act as parents but often do not know how to care for babies and very young children. Many countries have started programs that work with these children.

Diarrhea is a leading cause of death in children. It can be especially harmful in children with AIDS. In Maharashtra, India, a child-to-child teaching program was started to help teach children about treating and preventing diarrhea. A health worker spends a few hours a day teaching the older children. Often one of the younger children has diarrhea. The health worker uses this as an opportunity to teach about the danger signs of dehydration (when the body loses too much water), how to make oral rehydration fluid, and when to visit a clinic for help. Children can follow the health of a friend with diarrhea as she is being treated. Often the children are inspired when the child gets better and they go home and teach their families what they have learned. You can bring children in your area together and teach them about HIV. They can then go home and teach their sisters, brothers, and parents.



Where should you teach?

Teaching can happen in many places. “Formal” teaching is usually done in a school, clinic, public building, or under a tree. Others teach “informally,” while cooking, walking, milking the cows, or weeding the yams. The best place to train people depends on whom you are trying to reach. For example, it may be better to talk with sex workers in the nightclub before they start work. This way they may think about what they learned while they work. Health care workers can be reached at the clinic. Teachers may feel most comfortable learning at school. You can use a barbershop to talk with men in the community. Traditional healers will learn better in their own homes than in a school or clinic. Find people where they live and work; do not make them come to you.

Getting the session started

How you set up your training session makes a difference. Sitting in a circle is a simple way to involve everyone. In a circle everyone can see each other’s face. People can share ideas more easily, instead of just being an audience for the teacher. By sitting on the same level as the group, you help people feel comfortable sharing ideas with you.

Later, especially if the group is large, you can split into smaller groups. The groups can then teach each other. Ask each smaller group to teach the larger group the most important things its members learned from each other.

Start the first session by explaining what you are planning for the day. Then ask people to introduce themselves. Self-introductions help people feel more comfortable talking to each other. One way to have people introduce themselves is to have each person explain who she is, why she came to the training session, and what she most wants to learn. Another way to start is to get a ball or a coconut. Have everyone stand in a circle and toss the coconut from one person to another. As each person gets the fruit have him say his name and where he is from and give a word describing himself that begins with the first letter of his name. For example, Kwame could catch the coconut and say, “I am Kwame from Accra, Ghana. Call me Kwame the king.” Yet another way to begin the session is to have each person turn to a partner and ask where the partner is from and why the partner wants to learn about HIV. Then each person can tell the group about her new friend.

You can ask people what they have already heard about how HIV is spread and how people get sick from the virus, and about any personal experiences they have had with HIV. This will show what people in the group are most interested in and what they want to learn more about; it gives you a starting place for introducing new ideas. It also helps everyone become comfortable talking in the group. Most important of all, discussing these issues lets the group understand that people have different beliefs and experiences with HIV and AIDS. Some of the people in the group may have HIV. If they feel comfortable talking about their experiences, this can be especially powerful for others. Personal stories make the issues the group will be talking about seem more important to everyone in the group.

Planning a training session: Before you start

Plan goals for your sessions:

- Design your training to meet the needs of the community.
- Design the training with the strengths and weaknesses of the group in mind.
- Choose how many people you want to train.
- Think about which exercises will work best for the group.
- Make any learning materials you will need, such as drawings or puppets.

Work with the community to:

- Choose the place for your session.
- Choose the best time (time of day, day of the week, and time of year).
- Make a schedule for the training sessions.
- Let people know about the meetings.

Once one person begins talking, others usually join in. A feeling of trust and cooperation can be built if everyone feels comfortable speaking. Trust is important. Talking about HIV means talking about sex, drugs, and other sensitive topics. In the beginning, it is easier for the group to answer general questions that do not make people uncomfortable. After talking about sex and HIV in a general way, people will be more comfortable discussing their own experience.

Pay attention to how you state questions. Closed-ended questions are usually not the best way to get a discussion started. For example, asking the group “Does everyone here use condoms regularly?” invites a “yes” or “no” answer and makes those who do not use condoms feel guilty about saying so.

During and after the training session

During the course

At the beginning of each class, explain your plan for the day.

Ask the group to make up some rules for the session. Here are some examples:

No one should be pressured to talk about feelings or ideas they are uncomfortable sharing.

Respect everyone's opinions about sexuality. Acknowledge and accept differences of opinion and experience.

Clarify the difference between "I believe" and "It is true that."

Establish confidentiality. Emphasize that no one should talk about other people's personal feelings or experiences outside the group.

Evaluate how your training is going:

Ask people if they are learning what they want to learn.

If they are not, ask for suggestions about how to change the training session to make it better. Should different issues be talked about?

Should the training be given in a different way?

After the course

Discuss ways that people can learn more on their own.

Make time for discussion of the course:

Ask the people in the group what they thought about the session and about ways to improve it; talk about successes and problems.

Have group members help organize the next session.

Instead, you might ask, "Why do condoms work against HIV?" Open-ended questions like this invite people to talk and share their ideas.

Notice who is talking in the group. Shy people do not talk very much. In some communities older people hold most of the authority, so younger people may not want to say what they think. In other cultures, the opposite is true. Both younger and older people's ideas are important for learning about HIV.



Encourage everyone in the group to speak.

In many communities women will speak less often when they are in groups with men than when they are in groups of women. This is a problem because women's opinions are important when talking about AIDS, and men and women need to talk about HIV together. One of the most important tasks in running a training session is to help everyone share their ideas. Ask each person in the group a question at some time during the training. Do not be afraid of silences. Allow at least three seconds for someone to answer a question—it may seem awkward at first, but more people will express their ideas if they think you are waiting to hear from them. You can ask quiet people to sometimes run the discussion. The idea is to try to bring out different points of view.

Fill in the blanks

People are often embarrassed to talk about sex. Even HIV health workers may be shy about the topic. But it is important for anyone talking about HIV to be comfortable discussing sex and body parts. Humor can help people relax during a training session and allow them to talk more comfortably about these topics. One option is to use a story with blanks. First draw pictures of different body parts used during sex, such as a hand, a mouth, a penis, an anus, breasts, and a vagina. Next, ask the group to give you all the words they know to describe each body part. For example, most people know many other ways to say "penis." Also ask the group for words to describe different sexual acts. Then, write on a chalkboard or piece of paper a story with blanks like the one that follows. Ask each person to read one sentence from the story (or you can read them out loud) and at the blank you point to one of the pictures you have drawn on the board. The person then picks a word from the list to fill in the blank. The next person fills in a word for the next blank. We have included an example below; you can change it to fit your community.

María: Hi, José! What's up? You look tired.

José: Hi, María. I was at home with Tina and I was feeling restless. I asked her if she wanted me to touch her _____ [breasts]. She said no but that I could kiss her _____ [mouth].

María: I understand. I was at the movies with Juan and asked him if he wanted to put his _____ [penis] in my _____ [vagina]. He said he wanted _____ [oral sex].

José: You should have told him that he could _____ [masturbate].

María: Life is complicated!

Helping others lead

Many trainers are surprised to find that there is a lot they can learn from the people in their training sessions. Teaching is sometimes the best way to learn. Medical students in the United States have a saying: “See one, do one, teach one.” If someone in the group has special knowledge or skills, she can help teach the group. For example, you can ask a midwife to teach the group about how a baby is born and ways that midwives can protect themselves and their patients from getting HIV. Having people in the training session teach each other helps everyone—including you—learn.

Good trainers often say there is no such thing as a stupid question. If someone has a question, others in the group often have the same one. Try to answer questions when they are raised, rather than at the end of the training session. This way questions are not forgotten along the way and anything that is confusing can be made clear before you move on to the next topic.

Using language and methods that work

Try to teach at a level that is understandable for most of the people in the group. Asking questions will help you know if people understand what you are saying.

You can change your teaching style to fit the group. Some people learn better from a story or pictures. Others learn better if an idea is written down. Think ahead before trying a new method. For example, if people are not used to seeing drawings that represent a larger-than-life view of an object, you may get unexpected reactions. Drawing a virus on the chalkboard may lead people to believe that viruses are huge. Because they have never seen something that looks like your picture, they may even think HIV does not exist in their area.

Explain words or ideas that are new to the group. Add enough new information each day to keep people interested, but not so much that people are



overwhelmed. When possible, give new information in a meaningful way by using practical examples from real life.

Brainstorming

“Brainstorming” is when a group of people get together and share their ideas about how to solve a problem. A brainstorming session about AIDS might start with the question “Why are people afraid of people with AIDS?” The group can talk about people’s fears of death and catching the virus. You can talk about these fears and about how HIV really is and is not spread. When brainstorming, write the answers down so that people can see them. Talk about which ideas are most helpful and follow through with the ones that seem best. At the end, discuss the answers and give out tasks for the next meeting. You can use brainstorming to define a problem and to develop a solution.



Using pictures

Many trainers use pictures as a means to start a discussion in a group. Pictures are especially useful with people who cannot read, but they can help everyone. Asking the group what a picture means to them will raise different points of view. Let each person tell everyone else what he sees. You should avoid explaining the picture before hearing everyone’s ideas; let each person think for himself. For example, you can ask people what they think of a picture of a man in a pharmacy. To get the discussion started, ask a simple question such as, “What is this man buying?” Someone



might answer that he is buying condoms, and this might start a discussion about how condoms help prevent the spread of HIV. Someone else might answer that the man is buying medicine, and this might start a discussion about whether there is a cure for AIDS and whether there are medicines for people with HIV and AIDS.

Using role plays

Learning by playing games or watching a play can work better than listening to a lecture. In a role play, people take the role of a character in a difficult situation and act out real-life problems. This helps the people acting and the people watching deal with their own problems. Role plays help people prepare and practice what they would say or do at a difficult time; they bring situations to life. Many situations do not seem complicated when you hear about them, but acting them out while the group is watching can bring out difficulties that appear in real life. Role plays help people to think of creative solutions to those difficulties. Role plays can help people overcome shyness, embarrassment, or fear. You can use a role play to help a person practice telling his partner his HIV test results or asking a partner to have safer sex. Role plays can show the worst and the best things that could happen in a given situation.

A role play

Ask two people in your group to act out a role play involving a husband and wife. One person plays the role of the man, who works five days a week in another town. The other plays the woman, who works in the market at home. The man has started to have sex with another woman from the town where he works. He loves his wife and his girlfriend. Unfortunately, he has recently found out he has HIV. He thinks he got it from his girlfriend. Now he wants to use condoms when he has sex with his wife, but he is afraid that if he tells her about his girlfriend or that he has HIV, his wife and family will disown him. In the role play, the two people can act out the conversations that the man might have with his wife or girlfriend.



Finally, role plays can help people understand other people's points of view. People in a role play can act their parts for a few minutes and then trade roles. This helps them understand both sides of a problem. It also will help them see how another person would talk about the same problem. Afterward, the group watching the role play can brainstorm with suggestions from their own experience or ideas on how to make talking to each other easier. Two new people from the group can repeat the role play and the group can give more ideas about what they thought worked and did not work.

Serving as an example

Others will learn from your example as a group leader. A leader encourages everyone in the group to participate in learning and teaching. You will set a good example if you show that you are willing to accept your own mistakes and lack of knowledge. When you are genuinely concerned about people with HIV, the people in your training sessions will be too.

Practice what you teach. If you want people to participate, do not spend the entire training session lecturing. Teach through stories, skits, games, and role plays. Think about taking the group to visit an HIV project in another town. Some trainers like to have different activities on different days. For example, Tuesday could be a day for trips to other places to learn from people doing similar work; Wednesday could be a day for working on a play; Thursday could be a day for more traditional lecture-style learning. If the group meets once a week, each meeting might be structured differently. After trying different ways to organize the sessions, you can choose the ways that work best for each particular group. You will know your training is successful when group members are able to teach other people what they have learned.

After the session

Plan for follow-up and support after the training session. Decide how much supervision the new workers will need. How will they start using their new skills? Will they learn best if in the beginning they work with other, more experienced health workers who could give them advice on how they could be better? Will after-work meetings help them learn from common mistakes and experiences? There is always more to be learned. A program of ongoing training will help people continue to learn.

An example of a one-day training workshop for HIV health workers

1. **Introductions:** Divide the group into pairs. Have the two people in each pair talk to each other about themselves and what they want from the training. Gather everyone in a circle and ask each person to introduce her partner to the group. (15 minutes)
2. **Objectives:** Discuss what people in the group want to learn by the end of the training. What would they like to be able to do with this information? (15 minutes)
3. **Exercise 1:** Brainstorm with the group on the ways people can and cannot get HIV. Ask the group members for questions or worries about HIV. The goal is to review how HIV is spread and to help people share their concerns. This exercise helps people talk to each other and make learning goals for the training session. (45 minutes)
4. **Presentation 1:** Give a presentation about how to identify and counsel patients at high risk for HIV. Include basic information on the spread of HIV, HIV testing, and counseling. (1 hour)
5. **Exercise 2:** Split into two groups for role plays. Each group can plan a role play, act it out, and then lead a discussion with the whole group. The first play can describe a man and a health worker talking. The man wants an HIV test because he had sex with a woman he visited while traveling (see Chapter 8). The second play can be about a married woman who is worried about being pregnant and having HIV (see Chapter 9). (1 hour)
6. **Lunch** (1 hour)
7. **Presentation 2:** Give a presentation about social issues in HIV counseling, including ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and drug use. The goal is to help people better understand those from different backgrounds, and to use this information to improve HIV counseling. (30 minutes)
8. **Exercise 3:** List words used to describe different groups of people in your area. Some of these words will carry negative associations. Talk about the list. The goal is to learn about negative ideas people may have about certain groups of people, and how these ideas can get in the way of HIV education. (1 hour)
9. **Exercise 4:** Act out another role play to develop different ways to talk about sex. Divide the group into pairs: One person plays a young woman who wants to talk about “safer sex” with a new boyfriend, the second person plays the boyfriend, who would like to have sex with the young woman. The group can watch the two actors and then talk about their behavior. (1 hour)
10. **Summary and evaluation:** Talk about the training session and about local support for HIV activities. Discuss follow-up training. Have a final round of questions and comments. (30 minutes)
11. **Future plans:** Ask people in the group to discuss what they plan to do about HIV in their communities. (30 minutes)

Answering Phan's questions

“How do I stir up interest within the group? How do I involve everyone, even the people who usually get bored? What if people are too shy to talk about issues like sex and drug use?”

To stir up interest, it is important that Phan helps the group teach itself about HIV. This means that everyone should have a chance to talk. Phan can ask the group members to sit in a circle and introduce themselves. He can use a picture or a specific question about HIV to get people talking. Different people from the group can write people's questions on a chalkboard. Early in the training, Phan can ask why each person is interested in HIV and AIDS and what he wants to learn. Some people do not like to talk about sensitive issues like sex; in order to make the discussion easier, Phan can have everyone act in role plays. He can break up the large group into smaller groups to talk about different ideas. The small groups can then return to the bigger group and explain what they learned. After the training session, Phan can ask the group what worked, what did not work, and how to make the training better next time.