

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 19 year old woman and I found out I am HIV positive a year ago. At first I was shocked but I told my sister and she helped me to tell my mother. We never tell other people – I am not sick and I can still do my dressmaking.

Recently I met Thando at the choir I joined. I like him and he is proposing love to me. But now I am so worried. I don't want to tell him that I am positive because he won't want me for a girlfriend. Also he might tell others around here and they will stop coming to me for sewing.

I wonder if someone like me can have a boyfriend now. At my support group they say it is fine to have sex if we use condoms, but I am still afraid. Is it better to wait for a boyfriend who is also HIV positive so he will understand and not blame me?

So, these are my questions: can I accept Thando's love and if I do, must I tell him about the HIV before I become his girlfriend? Auntie, please give me some advice.

Winnie

TALKING POINTS

- Would you buy clothes from a dressmaker if you knew she was HIV positive? Why or why not? Is your answer based on good information?
- In your opinion, how many young people in your area have sex without knowing their partner's HIV status – a few, some, a lot? When is this very risky, and when is it less risky?
- Is it OK for Winnie to have sex with Thando if he's HIV-negative? What dangers are there? How can they avoid them?
- Is it possible Thando is also HIV positive? If yes, what should they do?
- When should Winnie tell Thando that she is HIV positive?

- Never
- Before she starts having sex with him
- Only if he asks her
- When they know each other much better
- Only if they want to have children

Give reasons for the answer you choose.

What could happen in each situation? Think of good and bad possibilities.