

## Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a man aged 22. My mother is HIV positive and talks about it openly. She works for an AIDS organisation. 'HIV is nothing to be ashamed of,' she says, 'Why should I hide it? We deserve love and acceptance.'

I was in Grade 4 when my mother told me she was HIV positive. At first I was scared she would die but now I know you can have HIV and stay well for years. My mother's been HIV positive for over 12 years. She takes care of herself by eating good food and relaxing so she is mostly fine. She says we need to be open about HIV and AIDS and break down everybody's fears so they'll treat HIV positive people better. I disagree – people have bad attitudes about AIDS so it's not worth telling them. You can tell close family and friends, but they must keep it secret.

One thing we agree on, though, is you must tell your kids, because they find out anyway. They must know the truth and be able to talk about it.

So, Auntie, what do you think? I love my mom and I'm proud of her – but which of us is right?

**Taurai**

## TALKING POINTS

- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of telling people if you are HIV positive? Write these down in two columns.
- If you had HIV or AIDS, who would you tell – a counsellor, your family, friends, workmates, others? Who would you definitely not tell and why?
- How did you feel as a child when your parents tried to keep something secret from you? Tell your group about your feelings, not about the secret! Do you agree that you should tell children the truth, even if it's sad?
- How can parents help their children to accept that they, or one of the children, are HIV positive? Share your ideas, then find out if your local AIDS organisations can tell you more.

