Auntie Stella is a participatory toolkit for youth. An interactive web version is available in English at www.tarsc.org and www.auntiestella.org. Auntie Stella is also available in Shona, Ndebele and Kiswahili, with plans for translations into French and Portuguese in the coming year. These translations can be accessed at http://www.tarsc.org/publications/ under the Children, women and youth section. To make it easier to access these materials, we have divided each translated version into 3 files:

- Auntie Stella question cards
- Auntie Stella answer cards
- Auntie Stella Facilitator’s and Adaptation Guide

Please make sure you download all three documents for a complete set.

Auntie Stella is also available on CDROM and as a printed pack with the letters on cards. The toolkit contains 40 laminated question and answer cards, a 40-page Facilitator’s and Adaptation Guide and two information cards — one listing the topics in the letters and the other explaining difficult words.

To find out more about the Auntie Stella programme, or to place an order for a CDROM or hard copy, please contact admin@tarsc.org or Box CY2720 Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe.
Dear Zandile

It’s hard when two people want different things from each other but, as the elders say: *ubude abuphangwa* (don’t rush into doing something before you’re ready). Many people decide to wait until they are older or married to have sex and there are many advantages to this decision. When you are older, you are emotionally more ready to have a relationship. Also, if you don’t have sex, you are not at risk from STIs, HIV and unplanned pregnancies.

In the meantime, it’s good that the two of you can hug and kiss and then stop. This is a wonderful way of showing how much you love each other. Don’t worry, boys – and girls – can stop any time with no ill-effects.

However, many young people believe that once you start touching and kissing you end up having sex, so it’s better to spend time together with friends, instead of alone cuddling and kissing.

In the end young people must decide what is right for them without pressure from anyone else. Talk to your boyfriend. If he truly loves you, he will understand.

If you decide to have sex later, be sure to use a condom. Talk about this before – it’s harder if you leave it to the last minute. Remember, girls can also get and carry male or female condoms. Good luck.

*Auntie Stella*
Do you think it’s possible to hug and kiss and then stop without going the whole way (having sex)? If not, what can you do? If you were Zandile, where would you draw the line so you can have fun but not get carried away and do more than you want?

**QUIZ: Are we ready for sex?**

Do this alone or with your partner. Answer YES, NO, or NOT REALLY.

1. Do we know each other well and trust each other?
2. Are we good friends?
3. Can we talk easily about sex and how far we want to go?
4. Have we talked about and agreed how we will protect each other from pregnancy, STIs and HIV?
5. Have we discussed having an HIV test before we start having sex?
6. Have we talked about what we will do if the girl gets pregnant?

**Answers:** If you answered NO or NOT REALLY to any of these questions, maybe you and your partner aren’t ready to have sex yet. It’s a big decision.

In your group, write down all the reasons some young people go ahead and have sex. Then write all the reasons why others wait until they are older. Which would you choose and why?
Dear Peter

Don’t worry – there is nothing wrong with you. Boys’ penises start growing during puberty, which is usually between 11 and 15 years but can begin earlier or later. It’s natural for teenage boys to compare their penises, but since everyone reaches puberty at different times, it’s normal for boys of the same age to have different size penises.

Even when your body is fully grown, there is no ‘normal’ or ‘correct’ size penis. People are different sizes – so are penises!

Also, the size of your penis has little to do with how much pleasure you give your partner when you have sex. The secret is how you use your penis and other parts of your body to make your partner and you feel good. Women generally like a lot of touching and kissing before the penis goes inside, as they get sexually excited more slowly than men. People also enjoy sex more if they’re with someone who cares about them and finds out what they like and dislike. It is easier to have this kind of relationship when you are older and more ready to talk about what you want.

Auntie Stella
• Penis size is not important to a happy relationship but what is? (Think about your personality and how you behave, not only what you look like.)

• Write your name at the top of a sheet of paper and pass it round your group. When you get someone’s paper, write what you find attractive about them. (For example: *You’ve got a wonderful smile/ I like your strong shoulders/ You’ve got beautiful curly hair.*) Sign your name if you want to. When your own paper comes back to you, you will see what people admire about you.

• Is there somewhere or someone in your community willing to give you reliable advice about issues like your body, sex and relationships – your family, school, clinic or church? Discuss or try out these places to see which are most sympathetic and helpful. You have the right to ask any question and get honest answers and practical help.

• If there is not enough information and support for young people in your area, what can you do about it? Is there a youth centre near you or could you start one? Share your ideas and choose the most practical.
Dear Patricia

Your brother-in-law is lying about tradition. In Shona and Ndebele culture, chiramu or sibale is a playful teasing friendship between a girl and her brother-in-law. It does NOT mean that she should sleep in the same room as him or have sex with him; this is not accepted in our cultures. You definitely have the right to say ‘no’ when adults try to harm you.

Ask your aunt, a family friend or another sympathetic adult for help – it will be easier to deal with this situation with support. Try to talk to your sister too.

It is illegal in Zimbabwe for anyone to have sex with a girl or boy under the age of 16. Any adult who does this can go to prison. It is illegal to force anyone of any age to have sex. This is rape and should be reported to the police. The chances of getting pregnant or being infected with an STI (including HIV) make it even worse.

Our culture is wonderful and keeps us together as families and communities. People should never use ‘our culture’ as an excuse to treat people – especially young people – badly.

Auntie Stella
Many traditional cultural practices in southern Africa relate to young people and sex, such as sexual initiations, virginity testing, wife inheritance and others. Make your own list. Then discuss what you like and dislike about these traditions. For example, which of them prevent and which encourage the spread of HIV?

Does your traditional culture treat girls and boys equally? If not, how do you feel about this? What can you do about it?

How can you work with traditional leaders and elders to change practices that are harmful to young people today? Who else can help you?

Every community is influenced not only by our traditions, but also by new ideas that come from outside. Draw a picture (or make a list) to show what you like best about traditional AND non-traditional modern culture. Can you take the best from both cultures to guide you through your life?
Dear Petronella

Firstly, there is no need for you to leave home. You are not in danger. Now that your uncle is so ill, he needs companionship and help.

There are three main ways that a person can get HIV: by having unprotected sex with an infected person; through infected blood on needles or blades; or from mother to child at birth or when breastfeeding.

You will NOT get HIV from sharing plates, towels or toilets, or even sleeping in the same room. There is a small risk of infection if you have a cut on your hands and fresh blood from someone with HIV goes into it. To be extra safe, protect your hands with rubber gloves, a plastic bag or paper when cleaning up anything with blood or body fluids on it. Always wash your hands and dirty bedding and clothes in soapy water. You can also use bleach, like Jik, if you want.

Looking after a sick person is hard, so you need support. There are organisations and people in most areas who give medical help and advice, and talk to you about your worries. Sometimes they even help with food and school fees.

So, remember: your uncle needs your help and compassion. Do not be afraid.

Auntie Stella
In most families, women are responsible for looking after a sick person. What role can men and young people play? Why is it important to involve them? Make a list of the things you can do to help. For example: help clean sick people’s homes, talk to them, play with the children or help them with their homework, fetch firewood and cook a meal.

Find out which organisations, churches or clinics in your area help when families are looking after people with HIV or AIDS. Do any of them give training in home-based care? Would you like to be trained? You can also start or join a support group for young people caring for people with HIV or AIDS. Share your worries and achievements.

In your group, list the reasons why so many young people contract HIV. (Include social, religious and cultural reasons as well as other problems like poverty, no jobs, problems with clinics, and so on.)

a Which of these problems can you solve and how?
b Which of these problems are so big that they need larger, more powerful organisations to take on the challenge?
c Is there a role for young people in helping these larger organisations?

What can you do to help yourself and others stay uninfected?
Dear Lovemore

What a pity your mother didn’t leave a will. If she had, your life would not be so hard now. Your uncles should be ashamed for taking your family’s possessions.

At your age you should not have to deal with this situation alone. Every community includes people and organisations who look after and support young people who have no parents. Find them and ask for help. Ask the pastor for advice. Talk to people or organisations in your area, especially groups who help families affected by AIDS. Ask head teachers, nurses, traditional leaders or government district officers.

Don’t give up and don’t be shy to ask for help – all young people deserve to be cared for and have food, clothes, a place to live, education and safety.

Yes, a lot of young people are in the same situation. Talk to them. You have so much to share – your sadences, struggles and victories too. You can also share information and ideas about solving your problems. Plan an activity together – like starting a vegetable garden. Ask government and organisations for things you need; you are stronger as a group than by yourself.

I wish you and your brothers and sisters happier times.

Auntie Stella
• Children need love, food, a place to live, education and a life that feels safe. Are there many young people in your area – with or without parents – who don’t have these things? How are they surviving?

• Where can children and young people like Lovemore go for help in your area? Do you think they get enough help? If not, what can you and your community do to make their lives easier?

• **A PLAY:** Make up a play about a group of young orphans who are invited to a District Health Committee meeting to discuss the help they need from their community. Decide who else is at the meeting (for example, a nurse, government officials, someone from an AIDS support organisation). After the play, discuss the following questions:

  a What happened at this meeting? Did the adults listen to the young people? Why or why not?

  b How can young people make sure that health and community services listen to their opinions about their real needs? What support do you need to make this happen and who could give it?
Dear Titus

I can definitely say that you don’t need love potions to get someone to fall in love with you.

It’s wonderful to fall in love but you can’t force it to happen. It just comes naturally. Some people find girlfriends or boyfriends at your age, but many don’t until much later. And even when they do fall in love, it doesn’t mean they have to have sex.

Don’t worry so much about what your friends say. Remember, many of their stories about sex may not be true. Boys are famous for boasting about sexual experiences they don’t actually have.

Also, you don’t always have to do the same as your friends. Follow your own feelings and trust yourself more.

So, stop worrying – stay happily single until the right girl comes along. Lack of experience won’t matter then.

In the meantime, focus on your studies, find other interests and learn to respect and talk to the girls around you without worrying so much about love. It will knock you off your feet sooner or later.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

• Make a list of the things you do just to be like your friends. Decide which are good for you and which are risky. Would you like to stop doing these risky things? Discuss with your group how you could do this.

• Give yourself a mark out of 10 for self-confidence (how much you believe in yourself and your own decisions). Ask a close friend if they agree with your mark. If your mark is low, how can you help each other to be stronger? If it is high, how can you be sure you listen to other people’s advice?

• Make a list of the good things about yourself. Include your good qualities (for example, I’m generous, I’ve got a good sense of humour, I can solve problems) and things you’re good at (I can dance well, I’m good at farming, I’m a great football player, I can tell stories to young children). Put the list somewhere you can see it, and add to it when you think of other things.

• Is it usual for boys and girls you know to be just friends? Would you like this to happen more often? If yes, work with a mixed group of boys and girls to decide on two or three fun activities to do together this week. At the end of the week, discuss what you learnt about being friends.
Dear Fortunate

You are lucky. If your ex-boyfriend hadn’t told you about his STI, you may not have known that you were infected. But since you got treatment quickly, you are not likely to have a problem.

Many people aren’t as lucky as you. Women often have no signs of an STI for a long time and don’t know anything is wrong. If people don’t treat STIs quickly, the tubes in their sexual organs can get infected and blocked, and they can become infertile.

The more often you have STIs, the more likely you are to become infertile and the greater your risk of HIV. So, in future, use a condom every time you have sex.

Also, STIs are not the only cause of infertility. Other health problems can also cause it. For a couple who are infertile, it is most important to share the problem and try to solve it together. Family planning clinics can also help.

Our society often blames the woman for infertility but in half the cases the problem is with the man. Couples who can’t have children need support, not rejection, from their communities.

I hope this information helps you.

Auntie Stella
• What do people say about men who can’t have children? And about women who can’t? Make two lists and see if the feelings are similar or different. Who gets more sympathy? Why do you think this is?

• Discuss ways you can become more sympathetic to infertile people. What can you do to improve the attitude of your community?

• If you and a partner wanted children but couldn’t have your own, would you consider adopting a child who has no parents? Why or why not? What worries do people in your area or culture have about adopting, especially a child from outside your own family?

• See cards 13 and 25 for more information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
Dear Sithabile

You are absolutely right to refuse this teacher's demands, which are wicked and wrong. Many people would agree with me that this teacher should not be allowed to teach in any school after behaving in this way. Please, Sithabile, don’t stop going to his classes, but you must act quickly before he hurts you. Sexual abuse is wrong. Tell a friend, your parents or another teacher and get help.

If you don’t think anyone will believe you, confide in a close friend and make sure that if the teacher asks you to stay behind, the friend stays too. If the teacher insists that you stay alone, make sure your friend remains close enough to hear. If the teacher repeats this behaviour, then scream and let your friend be witness to what is happening. Refer the matter to the head of your school immediately. You should also go to the police, or contact an organisation that helps children who are being badly treated, beaten or sexually abused.

Auntie Stella
If any teacher or older person has done anything like this to you or a friend, tell a trusted person and report it to the police immediately.

Children and adults in many southern African countries can get help if they phone or write to a ‘helpline’. It is FREE of charge, and you can contact them from anywhere in the country. Find out the name, address and telephone number of the helpline in your area.

Phone or write to them if you need help, and tell your friends about them.

Invite a police officer or someone from an organisation that deals with youth issues to come to your school to talk about rape and other forms of sexual abuse.
Dear Samuel

I’m sure you were surprised when Misheck told you about his feelings for you and although you feel uncomfortable around him now, the things you like about him haven’t changed. There’s no reason to stop being his friend just because he’s sexually attracted to boys. He took a big step in telling you his secret.

Be completely honest with him about your own feelings. Tell him that you aren’t gay so you can’t be his boyfriend. Don’t mess around with his emotions. And if you can, let him know that you don’t reject him and you don’t want this to spoil your friendship.

Try to imagine how he feels and let him talk to you about being gay – he’s probably quite lonely if people around are against gays. If he doesn’t already know other gay people and organisations, encourage him to make these contacts.

Whatever you decide about your friendship with Misheck, you mustn’t tell anyone else – only he can decide who he wants to tell and when. Your society and schoolmates may be very negative so not many gay people want to ‘come out’. But Misheck is your friend and needs your support.

Auntie Stella
What do you think of Auntie Stella’s answer? Will Samuel be able to do what she says?

Imagine everyone is homosexual (gay) and you are the only heterosexual (straight) person. What would people say to you? How would you convince people that your sexuality is natural? How do you know? How would you feel when people tell you your feelings are unnatural?

If you’re straight (not gay), do you need to learn more about gay people? What else do you need to make you more understanding? And what can you do, individually and as a group, to change the way people think about gays and behave towards them? Make a list and get extra ideas from a gay-friendly organisation. Report back to your group after two weeks.

Think about other groups of people in society (poor people, disabled people or people from different backgrounds, for example) who are discriminated against. Why do you think society is critical of them?
Dear Vusi

Sometimes the hardest lessons in life come from realising our mistakes. We all make mistakes – some more serious than others – and the best thing to do when this happens is to own up and find a way of putting right our wrongs.

As it is now too late for you to listen to your father on this issue, my advice to you is first to talk to your girlfriend and decide together what you want to do. At some point, you need to talk to your auntie or uncle who will tell your father. You will also have to talk to the girl's parents. I do not know how they will react but, remember, you have a shared responsibility to the baby. Do not persuade yourself that this is your girlfriend’s problem alone.

I hope you manage to complete your education and become a responsible parent. I also hope that when your child is older, you'll find a way to help him or her make wise decisions in life.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- Do you know any young people who had to get married or have a baby when they were still at school? How did this affect them?

- **ROLEPLAY:** In fours, role play Vusi and his uncle or aunt telling his parents what has happened. How will they tell the parents? What do his father and mother say and do?

- What advice do your parents give you? Do you listen to them? If you don’t, why not?

- Think of a time when you did something dangerous, like going out late on your own, drinking too much or having sex without protection.
  
  a. Why did you do it?
  b. Did it have a good or bad result?
  c. What other choices did you have?
  d. How often is your behaviour risky?
Dear Simba

Don’t worry. It’s normal for boys to have strong sexual desires and frequent erections when they think about sex. Masturbation is an easy and safe solution to this but only do it in private.

Masturbation is rubbing your own sexual organs so you feel good, get sexually excited and often have an orgasm. (It’s also called ‘coming’, ‘climaxing’ or ‘release’.) This makes waves of contractions in your sexual organs and often over your body. When a boy has an orgasm, sperm is pushed out of his penis. When a girl has an orgasm, her vagina swells and gets moist.

Both boys and girls can enjoy touching themselves. Couples who want to have safer sex also masturbate (stroke and rub each other’s sexual parts) to give their partners pleasure. Masturbating has NO bad effects on your body or your mind. It helps to relieve sexual tension and is a healthy way of exploring your body. People of all ages (single or married) masturbate.

Although some religious groups say masturbation is wrong, others let individuals decide for themselves.

Auntie Stella
ANSWERS: Masturbation quiz

Only the second statement is TRUE. All the other statements are FALSE. What other things – positive and negative – have you heard about masturbation? Find out which ones are really true.

How do people in your community view masturbation – for example, as a safe and natural part of sexual life or as something bad? Is it the same for boys and girls? Are people mostly open about it or is it like a secret? If you think more young people should think positively about masturbation, discuss how you can make that happen.

Young people often have strong sexual desires. Besides masturbating, what else can you do to relieve them without having sex? Make a list of ideas (like going for a long run) then choose the best ones for yourself.
Dear Themba

It’s difficult when people want different things from a relationship, and it seems that sex is more important to you than to your girlfriend. However, very few girls want to rush into sex. They are unhappy when boys treat them like property and expect to buy sex from them in return for gifts and money.

Many girls and boys prefer to avoid the problems that arise from having sex when you are still a teenager. They don’t want to be worrying about pregnancy, STIs and HIV so they choose to abstain until they are older.

Think about a good relationship – is it just a way to get sex, or do you want to be with a real friend who cares about you? If you want this kind of friendship and love you need to think about what your girlfriend wants. Don’t pressure her into having sex; she doesn’t want to.

Some people might still treat girls differently from boys, but attitudes are generally changing now. Boys and girls are treated as equals. I hope you’ll have the courage to treat your girlfriend as your equal in the future and that you will be happy together.

Auntie Stella
What do you think about Auntie Stella’s reply? Do you agree with what she said to Themba? If not, what is your advice?

**GIRLS:** Make a list of what boys should and shouldn’t do and say if they want good friendships with girls.

**BOYS:** Make a list of what girls should and shouldn’t do and say if they want good friendships with boys.

Then find a group from the opposite sex. Swap your lists and study them. Get together in mixed groups and ask questions to find out more about what the others think.

Have a debate on one of the following topics:

- A girl should sleep with her boyfriend if he buys her things.
- ‘Love without sex is like a garden without flowers’ Do you agree?
- It is not okay to have sex before marriage.
**Dear Jabulani**

You are right to ask for advice. Warts or pimples on the penis or on a girl’s genitals can be just pimples, like spots on the face, or they can be signs of a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

If you have never had sex, you almost certainly don’t have an STI. However, if you recently had sex without a condom, the pimples could be a sign of STIs like genital warts, syphilis, chancroid or genital herpes. Your Form 2 teacher was probably referring to syphilis which can lead to mental illness if untreated. You need to get diagnosed and start treatment as soon as possible.

If you have an STI, it’s important to tell your sexual partner or partners so they can be treated too. Women, especially, can have an STI but show no signs.

So, please go to the clinic immediately. Most STIs are easily cured if you treat them quickly. Take a friend or adult you trust to support you in case the staff are unhelpful or criticise you. You have a right to good treatment without any rudeness. Good luck.

**Auntie Stella**
ANSWERS: STIs quiz

Statements 1 and 5 are TRUE. Statements 2, 3 (abstinence is also safe!) and 4 (different STIs have different signs, and women often have no signs) are FALSE.

PROJECT: Use Ministry of Health brochures or other information on different STIs. Each group chooses one STI and prepares a talk for the others. Tell them this information, if it’s available:

– What’s the name of this STI? (medical and ordinary names)
– What are the signs of this STI? (in men and in women)
– What is the treatment for this STI?
– How can you avoid getting this STI?

Afterwards, make up 10 questions about everything you have learnt about STIs. Keep the answers on a separate paper. Swap tests with another group, answer their questions and then mark the one you gave them to do. Who got the highest mark?

Invite a nurse or health worker to talk to you about STIs and your right to sympathetic and helpful treatment. Find out exactly what happens when a young person goes to the clinic with an STI problem. If clinics in your area aren’t sympathetic, how can you improve the situation? Who can help you?
Dear Florence

I am sorry you are in this situation, but it’s good that you are thinking about having an HIV test. This may be one of the bravest decisions you make in your life – and the wisest. It’s better to know than to live in fear.

When you are tested (at a New Start Centre, for example) well-trained counsellors will talk to you before and after the test, answer your questions and help you deal with your results, whatever they are. You don’t have to give your name and everything you say is secret.

A nurse will prick your finger to take a little blood. You usually get the result on the same day. The test is reliable but there is a ‘window period’ – if you were infected less than three months ago, it may not show. So, if you tested negative but had unprotected sex in the last three months, you will need a second test a few months later.

Please encourage your boyfriend to go for an HIV test. If he won’t go and won’t wear a condom, you have a difficult decision to make.

If you test negative, make sure you stay negative and never have this worry again.

Good luck to you and your boyfriend.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- If Florence goes for an HIV test and finds out she is HIV negative, what advice would you give her on how to stay HIV free? What support would she need?

- Make two lists:
  a. Why people don’t want to know their HIV status.
  b. Why it’s important to be tested to find out if you are HIV positive or negative.

  Which list is longer? What advice would you give someone who is thinking about having a test?

- Find out where your nearest Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centre is – maybe a New Start centre or a clinic. Find out if it’s free or how much you have to pay. Is there any age limit for people to be tested?

- Have you ever had sex without a condom? If you have, think about going to a VCT centre to be tested. What support do you need to get the courage to do this? Help each other where you can.

- ROLEPLAY: Two people pretend to be Florence and her boyfriend. Act out the conversation when she tells him about her worries and asks him to come with her to be tested. What happens in your roleplay?

  If the boyfriend doesn’t agree, discuss how Florence can convince him better.

- See Card 26 for information on how to live positively.
Dear Shamiso

Well done for asking, Shamiso! Cervical cancer affects the opening to the womb known as the cervix. It is the most common cancer among women in Zimbabwe and yet very few people know about it. If treated early, it can be completely cured.

A woman is at greater risk of getting cervical cancer if:

- she began to have sex at a young age (within a few years of starting her period)
- she’s had many sex partners
- her partner has had many sex partners
- she’s had genital warts
- she has HIV or AIDS
- she is older than 35.

Some women in Zimbabwe are now suffering from cervical cancer when they are still in their 20s. Think twice about having sex while you are a teenager and take care of yourself. Once you are sexually active, you should have a test called a Pap Smear once every year if you are in a high-risk group and once every three years if not. Most hospitals and clinics provide this test. No woman needs to die of cervical cancer if it is found early.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- What have you learnt about cervical cancer? Talk to your female friends and relatives. Tell them about the Pap Smear.

- Go through the list in Auntie Stella’s letter. Are you or your partner at risk of getting cervical cancer when you are older? If yes, find out more about cervical cancer and how to get tested.

- EITHER
  - Invite a nurse to come and talk to you about cervical cancer, what it is, how it can be diagnosed and treated.
  - OR
  - Do some research about cervical cancer by visiting a clinic or library. Prepare a short report to share with your friends and relatives.

Diagram of the cervix
Dear Sibongile

I’m sorry to hear your story. What your uncle did was very wrong. It is not your fault – he committed a crime and he must be stopped from doing this again.

Don’t be afraid – you must tell someone immediately. You cannot keep this a secret. *Umntwana ongakhaliyo ufela embelekweni* (keeping silent can destroy your life). Tell your parents, another relative or someone you trust. You need someone to advise and support you who will also help you go to the police and get other help.

Report the rape as soon as possible, preferably without washing or changing clothes in case the police want to take evidence. Also, ask a health worker for protection from pregnancy (the ‘morning after’ pill). Some clinics also have post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) drugs which prevent HIV if taken within three days after the rape.

Rape is never the victim’s fault but there are ways for women to try to avoid it. Never walk alone (if you do, look confident and walk fast). Never, at any age, drink too much alcohol or smoke *mbanje*. If you like a boy, tell him firmly how far you want to go before you start romancing. If you are attacked, scream, kick, bite, hit or knee him between the legs – and try to get away.

Sibongile, I do hope you find the help you need.

*Auntie Stella*
Why is there so much rape and violence against girls and women in our societies? Have a discussion. For each answer you give, ask the question ‘But why?’ to try and find a deeper cause.

Rape and abuse in your community

Look at these statements. How well do they describe your community? For each one, write TRUE, FALSE or NOT SURE.

1. In our community, girls and women can walk around safely anywhere, at any time, without being afraid.

2. Rape and abuse are not kept secret. If a young person reports rape or abuse, adults take action to stop it from happening again. No-one ever blames the young person.

3. If a young person has been raped, clinics have the right medical and counselling services and the police do their best to find and punish the culprit.

4. Boys believe and respect girls when they say ‘no’ to sex. They don’t think they have a right to sex; they know they can control their desires.

Results: Very few, if any, of you will be able to answer TRUE to all of the above questions. What would need to happen in your community to make it a safe place, free from rape, violence and abuse?

Find out more about the ‘morning after’ pill and PEP drugs. Ask your clinic if they are available there. If not, where can you find them?
Dear Similo

Your situation is very difficult but having sex for money will only lead to more problems. Many men who pay for sex refuse to use condoms. So you could end up pregnant or HIV-positive or both. It’s also possible that you will be beaten or raped.

Sex work (also called prostitution) is illegal in Zimbabwe so, if something bad happens to you, the police may not protect you and you could end up in jail. Please don’t do this. It will only lead to more misery.

What you CAN do is think of all the other ways to earn money, or how to find a person or organisation to help you. Ask as many people as you can – in your school, church or community – and keep on asking. The Ministry of Social Welfare may be able to help.

If all your efforts fail, don’t lose hope. Many people finish their schooling when they’re older. Also, there are other ways to learn. Get what skills you can, whether you’re paid or not. Find out about projects in your area and ask if you can help. Borrow books to read too.

When you eventually decide to have sex, do it for love and not for money. And make sure you know all about male and female condoms, contraceptive pills, and other ways to protect yourself from pregnancy, STIs and HIV. Good luck.

Auntie Stella
ROLEPLAY: Work with a partner. Take turns to play the role of a young person like Similo who is asking for advice from a respected older person on how she can pay her school fees.

After your role play, tell the group what it felt like to be Similo. What made it easier or harder to ask for help? What advice would you give someone in her situation?

Organise a debate on the following topic:

‘Most women do not become sex workers because they enjoy it, but because they need the money to feed and clothe their families’

Society usually criticises sex workers for their behaviour but they don’t criticise the men who pay for their services. Why do you think this happens? Is this right? If not, what can society do about this?

Do some research and find out the laws about sex workers and also about their customers in your country and others. What protection and rights do sex workers have in different countries? What do you think should happen?
Dear Edson

I am sorry that you are troubled by your experience of ‘wet dreams’. Don’t worry; there is nothing wrong with your body and no reason to feel embarrassed.

Wet dreams are a normal sign that your body is moving from childhood to manhood. This is called puberty. During puberty, your body changes and begins to produce sperm. These sperm are ready to leave your body and they often come out through ‘wet dreams’. You might find that you still have an erection when you wake up. This does not necessarily mean you have been dreaming about sex, it is just a sign that your body has matured.

Wet dreams are most common among teenagers although you can experience them throughout your adult life.

So don’t be afraid that this will mean problems when you marry – the wet dreams you are experiencing are perfectly natural. All men experience wet dreams at some time. Just ask an older brother or an uncle and they will confirm this.

Auntie Stella
 ACTION POINTS

- Complete the following sentences:
  a. I like the changes happening in my body as I grow up because…
  b. I don’t like some of the changes because…

  Share what you said with the others in your group.

  What did you learn from this exercise? Is there anything you would like to do or find out more about? Work out how best to do this.

- Do you have any other worries about what is ‘normal’? Talk to your friends or an older person you trust.
Dear Thandiwe

Yes, antiretrovirals (ARVs for short) can help people with AIDS. They do not get rid of HIV but they stop it from growing, allowing your immune system (which fights infections) to become strong again. And yes, they are expensive. But the price is slowly coming down as they are now produced in Zimbabwe.

However, ARVs are powerful and complicated, and people usually only start using them when they are quite sick. You must NEVER take them without medical advice and testing. Also, you need to be sure that you can afford to stay on them for the rest of your life because it’s dangerous to start them, then stop and then start again.

Remember, too, that ARVs are not the only way to stay healthy. You can fight HIV by eating the right foods, taking vitamins and living positively. This includes treating any illnesses (called opportunistic infections) immediately.

ARVs make you feel better but HIV is still in your blood so you can still infect another person or reinfect yourself. Remember, always use a condom when having sex, or practise safer sex.

Whether you use ARVs or not, try to live a healthy life and you will have many more years to look after your daughter. Good luck!

Auntie Stella
**ACTION POINTS**

- **EITHER:**
  Visit a clinic and other places helping people with HIV and AIDS to find out more about drugs and treatments.

- **OR:**
  Invite a knowledgeable person to come and talk to you about these drugs.
  
  Find out as much as you can about ARVs. Are they available to anyone? Are they free or what do they cost? Also find out what is good and what is difficult about taking the drugs.

- What support do people using ARVs need? From whom? (Think about the role of family and friends and also what care they need from clinics and other community institutions.)

- If ARVs can save lives, why do you think they are so difficult to get? In South Africa, ordinary people have been working together to convince the government to provide ARVs for everyone who needs them. What community health groups are there in your country working towards making the drugs cheaper and more available? What exactly are they doing? What role can young people play in these groups?

- See Card 26 for information on how to live a healthy and positive life when you have HIV or AIDS.
Dear Oliver

If your landlady is trying to have sex with you, then you are being sexually abused. This is called indecent assault and is illegal. You must get help and get out, before things get worse. I agree that complaining to her husband could get you into trouble. So I advise you to tell your parents immediately and also look for somewhere else to stay. I am sure your parents will want you to have safer accommodation and will do their best in future to pay the rent on time. If she tries again before you move out, tell her firmly to stop. If she insists, fight back.

It is very difficult to prove that a man has been sexually abused by a woman, especially when there is no sign of violence. However, the landlady is trying to force you to have sex against your will, and this is against your rights.

Please get yourself out of this situation as soon as possible.

Auntie Stella
Teenage rights in sex and relationships

Look at this list of teenage rights in sex and relationships, and talk about the questions below.

1. Nobody should touch you or make you have sex when you don’t want to.
2. It should be easy to get contraceptives and information on sexual health and adolescence.
3. All staff working at places like clinics or police stations should be well-informed, helpful and sympathetic.
4. There should be good testing, counselling, and treatment of HIV and AIDS, as well as available and affordable drugs.
5. Pregnant girls have the right to education.
6. If you have HIV or AIDS, nobody should treat you differently or rudely.
7. Everyone – male, female, young, old, poor, rich, black, white, fat, thin, gay, disabled – should be treated with respect.
8. Young people have a right to organise to get better health care and services.

- What do you think of this list? Is there anything you would add or take out?
- Do they all apply to boys and girls equally?
- Give your community a mark out of 10 for how well they protect the rights of young people.
- Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you respect the rights of other youth.

Make a promise to respect these rights in other people, and to get help if your rights are being abused.
Dear Pauline

Don’t worry – there’s no reason to think that you cannot have children in the future. It’s quite normal to have irregular periods in the first few years after you start menstruating. Some girls have a couple of periods and then nothing else for a whole year. Your periods should settle down after a while.

Other things affect your periods too – if you are worried or if you either lose or gain a lot of weight or if you’ve been sick for a long time. And for a girl who has had sex, missing periods are the main sign of pregnancy.

But talk to a nurse or health worker, especially if your periods don’t start again after a year. Try to have a healthy diet, with unrefined foods, lots of fruit and vegetables, and foods rich in iron – like dark-leaved vegetables, peas, beans and lentils, eggs, chicken and fish, other meat, grasshoppers and termites (majuru/ amagenga).

You and your friends need reliable information about your changing bodies. Talk to a youth-friendly clinic or health worker and organise a meeting where they can answer your questions. Or find out where your nearest youth corner or youth centre is, and ask them for information.

Auntie Stella
• Pauline is afraid that she is infertile. What fears do you have about your body, sex and having children? Discuss them with your group and see if they can help you. If you want to do it secretly, write your fears on a paper and don’t write your name. Put the papers in a bag and mix them up, then take them out to discuss.

If your group can’t help, who can you go to for advice?

• People get information about their bodies, sex and relationships from many different places and people. Where do you get your information from? Make a list. How can you find out what is true and what is false?

• Draw a picture of a youth-friendly clinic, making it clear why the clinic is youth-friendly. Compare your picture with the clinic you visit. Do you think your clinic treats young people with respect? If not, how can you and other people in your community work together to make it more youth-friendly?
Dear Winnie

Most importantly, I want to say that being HIV positive does NOT make you a different person from before and nobody makes special rules about what is ‘allowed’. You deserve the same as everyone else – love, relationships, sexual pleasure, marriage and children. Many HIV positive people have partners; sometimes the partners are HIV positive too but certainly not always.

Telling Thando won’t be easy but you will need to do it some time. Get to know him better before you do anything. You obviously need to discuss HIV and condoms with him before you start having sex. If he refuses to use condoms, won’t accept you using female ones or won’t stick to completely safe sex, then sex is OUT, however nice he is.

You are absolutely right to worry about passing on HIV. I wish everyone was as responsible as you! Remember, though, even if your partner is also HIV positive, you must still use a condom so you don’t reinfect each other every time you have sex.

Best wishes for a happy future, whatever you decide.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- Do you agree with Auntie Stella? Why or why not?
- **ROLEPLAY:** You need two people. Winnie tells Thando she is HIV positive. After the role play, the actors tell the group how they felt during the conversation. Then everyone can discuss these questions:
  a. What happened at the end? Who decided? Was it difficult for both actors? Was it a good conclusion? If not, how could you make it end better?
  b. Would this be the normal result among young people you know?
  c. Would it be different if Thando was the HIV positive one and he had to tell Winnie? If yes, what might the differences be? (Do the roleplay again reversing roles to see if and how it changes.)
  d. What individuals and organisations can help people in this situation?

We need to talk now. I must tell you something ... ...
Dear Philani

Your friends are giving you bad advice. Although some people say *mbanje* makes them relaxed, others find it makes them confused and afraid.

I understand that you feel left out without a girlfriend, but the best thing is to talk to girls just as friends. Friendship may grow into a relationship.

Start by just saying hello, smiling, and saying something about school, the weather – anything. The real trick is to ask other people about themselves and be interested in their lives and problems. Girls will appreciate this more than if you try to show off.

And remember, nobody is watching out for you to do something stupid. They are too worried about making mistakes themselves!

You can’t solve your problems through drugs like *mbanje* or alcohol. Many people behave badly when drunk or stoned, leading to problems with family, friends and employers. Also, smoking *mbanje* is illegal and can get you into trouble.

You don’t need drugs to be liked by other people, nor to get the courage to do something. There are much better ways to overcome your shyness. Good luck.

**Auntie Stella**
ACTION POINTS

• Make a list of all the drugs you know and the effects they have on people who use them. Which ones are addictive (this means that once you start using them, you can’t stop)?

• Look at the list of reasons why young people take drugs. Discuss which of these are the most relevant for you and your friends. Put them into order from 1 to 5, starting with the most common reason and ending with the least common reason.

  Teenagers take drugs because:
  – their friends are doing it
  – to escape from difficulties in their lives
  – they want to escape from who they are
  – they think the drugs will give them courage
  – they are bored

• After discussing this list, assess whether you are at risk of using drugs. How can you and your friends help each other stay away from these drugs? Who else can help you?

• ROLEPLAY: You need a girl and a boy. The shy boy approaches the girl and starts talking to her. After a few minutes, change roles so the girl starts talking. Then discuss:

  a What it felt like to start the conversation, and to be the other person?
  b What you learnt about overcoming shyness and making friends?
Dear David

You are not alone. Many teenagers can’t communicate with their parents, especially about personal issues like sex and relationships. Parents need time to get used to the new person you are becoming, to understand and trust you as you question and learn and grow.

Try to understand that your parents care and worry about you, and want you to grow up safe, happy and successful. They remember from their own youth the temptations and dangers you face, and how easy it is to make mistakes. Life has become more scary since they were young, especially with AIDS. That’s why they go on about what you mustn’t do. Remember, they often have very good advice to offer.

You can improve your relationship with them. First, show them they can trust you. Keep to their rules. If you think they are unfair, talk to them about it. And listen when they advise you. Secondly, ask their opinions about your real problems. Tell them what you want from life too, so they’ll know you better. Finally, always talk to them calmly and respectfully, never get angry or rude. If you start to lose your temper, suggest you talk later.

Keep trying – it’s well worth the effort. And if this still doesn’t work, talk to a teacher or a family friend.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- Make a list of the things you like about yourself – such as your nice smile, special skills or strong character. Where did you get or learn these things? Could they have come from your family?

  How does this exercise make you feel about your family’s contribution to the way you think and feel?

- **ROLEPLAY**: In pairs, choose a common area of disagreement between parents and teenagers. Take turns to play the role of the parents in an argument, then tell the group what it felt like.

- In your groups, think of a world where parents and elders did not offer advice to youths and children. What would that world be like? Present your group’s ideas in a drawing, play, song or poem.

- Make a date to talk to one or both your parents about something that worries you. Practise what you’ll say first and remember what Auntie Stella said about staying calm, understanding and respectful.
Dear Leroy

Deciding to have sex with someone means you have responsibilities to each other. You must never put your partner in any danger so it’s important to tell your girlfriend and protect her from the risk of a complicated and dangerous illness. Also, if she has an STI and doesn’t get treated, she can infect you with it again.

STIs are all different and unfortunately the symptoms of many STIs are not very obvious. When women get STIs they often have no signs for a long time.

So, please make sure both of you are treated. Ask the nurse to give you a ‘partner notification slip’ for your girlfriend (and if possible for the woman you met at the beerhall too). She takes this slip to the clinic where she’ll get the same treatment as you, no questions asked. Do not share your medicine and take the full treatment even after your symptoms start to disappear.

You and your girlfriend need to discuss using condoms every time you have sex. This is the only way to avoid STIs. Stick to one partner and, since you’ve had unprotected sex, think about going for an HIV test.

As for your relationship – talk openly about what you want from each other. Honesty and trust are vital for a happy relationship. Good luck to both of you.

Auntie Stella
**ACTION POINTS**

- **ROLEPLAY:** You need a boy and a girl. Leroy decides to tell his girlfriend that he has an STI. What happens? Based on what you now know, if you were in Leroy’s situation, would you tell your partner/s you had an STI?

- **PROJECT:** Draw a community map of all the places you know where young people can get condoms. For each place on your map, mark the answers to these questions:
  
  a. Are the condoms free or do you have to pay?
  b. How old do you have to be to get them?
  c. Do they give them to girls?
  d. Do they give out the female condom?
  e. Are they polite to youth?

  Give each place a mark out of 10 depending on your answers to these questions.

  If your map shows that young people in your area can’t get condoms freely and easily, what can you do to improve the situation? Which organisations and individuals can help you?

- Look at Card Numbers 7 and 13 for more information about STIs.
Dear Charity

An HIV positive result does not have to be a death sentence. There are many ways to prevent yourself from getting sick. Firstly, you need to look after yourself well – eat natural and unprocessed food (it isn’t expensive!), get enough sleep and exercise, avoid things like sugar and alcohol, treat opportunistic infections (any sickness or infection) quickly and use condoms every time you have sex. An important way to protect your health is to stay hopeful and determined to have a good life.

Try to find an HIV counsellor and support group to encourage you – ask your test centre or any HIV or community health organisation. They can also help you talk to your aunt if you decide to tell her.

Many people are afraid of AIDS. They are afraid of dying, being alone, losing friends and being treated badly. Meeting other HIV positive people helps overcome these fears. Many people have had HIV for years and are healthy and successful; many have sexual relationships and some choose to have children. With advice and guidance, you can do this too. Other people can give you hope and their stories will make you strong. And you can help others, too.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- Talk to people who are open about having HIV or AIDS. Ask them to tell you everything that helps them to live healthy, positive and hopeful lives. Everybody needs this information – work with organisations and youth centres to tell more young people.

- Do some ‘attitude research’. For one week, listen to what people say about people with HIV and AIDS. Give information and argue politely with any negative ideas. Report back and say what you learned.

- Think about a time when you felt unhappy and alone AND managed to do something about it. What helped you? Tell the group. Then discuss which of your ideas would help people with HIV or AIDS.

- Look at cards 19, 22 and 40 for other questions from people living with HIV.
Dear Nyaradzo

I’m sorry you are in this difficult situation. I’m afraid you can get pregnant the first time you have sex. You need to have a pregnancy test to make sure. You can be tested at a clinic, or buy a test kit from a pharmacy.

If you are pregnant, talk to your boyfriend and to someone close to you. Please don’t harm yourself or your baby! Rather talk to people who can help you decide how best to look after the baby. This won’t be easy but hopefully family and friends will help you.

The ‘morning after’ pill is a special combination of contraceptive pills available from a clinic or pharmacy. It prevents pregnancy but only if you take it within 72 hours after having sex.

If you’re not pregnant, you’ve been lucky. Boys really pressure you about sex but, as you’ve found out, sex is no fun if you’re unhappy about doing it.

If you still want to stay with your boyfriend but not have sex, talk to him about it. Spend time with him, but not alone, and avoid alcohol and drugs. They make it harder to stick to what you really want to do.

Finally, I suggest you wait until you’re older and know what you want before you have sex – many people choose to wait until they are married. This is your choice but whatever you decide, when you do have sex, stay safer by using a male or female condom.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

**ROLEPLAY:** In pairs (a boy and a girl) a boy proposes love to a girl who says she’s got condoms and can help him to put one on. What happens?

Do the roleplay again, but swap roles so the boy acts the girl and the girl acts the boy. Is it the same?

Then discuss why girls as well as boys who are sexually active should carry condoms.

**QUIZ: The female condom**

Which of these statements are TRUE and which are FALSE? Check answers at the bottom of the page.

1. Female condoms protect men and women from pregnancy, STIs and HIV.
2. Female condoms are more expensive than male condoms.
3. A female condom can make a noise when used. To prevent this, put it into your vagina a few hours before you have sex.
4. It’s better to use a spermicidal cream with a female condom.

- Write a song or slogan encouraging young people to wait until they are older for sex and to stick to one partner. Sing it to or show the others and decide who is most persuasive.

- See card 32 for more information on what to do if you have an unwanted pregnancy.

**ANSWERS:** All these statements are true.
Dear Farai

I’m sorry your girlfriend is in such a difficult situation but I’m glad you are ready to support her.

The *lobola* system works well when it is applied correctly but not when families are only motivated by money. It is against a woman’s human right to be forced to marry against her will.

Talk to Susie and find out how she wants you to help her. The two of you can then work together to find a solution to this problem.

Maybe you and Susie can talk to other members of her family about what is best for her. If they are sympathetic, they can support her in discussions with her parents.

If there is still no change, Susie can approach a woman’s organisation for help. But this could mean breaking relations with her family. That’s a big decision for Susie, so try to support her and don’t add extra pressure to the stress she is already feeling.

The situation is difficult, but I hope you will get help from someone within your girlfriend’s family or from your community.

**Auntie Stella**
ACTION POINTS

• During the next week, interview 10 people, both adults and young people, and ask them whether they think parents have the right to choose who their sons and daughters should marry. Come back together and discuss what you found out.

• Think of other examples where young people and adults have different ideas about how things should be done. How can you find a way to discuss these differences, understand each other’s point of view, and work out solutions together?

• Arrange a session where you use some of the Auntie Stella cards with a mixed group of teenagers and adults. Ask the adults to discuss the talking and action points. Then talk about your views. Were they very different? Did this help to close the gap between the age groups?
Dear Cynthia

Good for you! I’m really proud of you and your classmates. It takes courage to stand up for what you think is right. Unfortunately, I’ve heard many other stories like this.

Remember that although your aim is to help Loveness, you are also trying to change the way the school system deals with teachers who abuse their students. This is not an easy task.

Try to get as many people as possible to support your efforts and sign your petition – students, teachers, parents, youth and women’s organisations, other people in your community and especially people who are respected and have influence (like community leaders, political leaders, and business people). Send a letter to local and national newspapers so other people and organisations know what you are doing. The more people who are behind you, the more likely the School Board will listen.

Another thing – don’t worry if you don’t succeed immediately. Change often comes about quite slowly. Don’t feel defeated if you don’t succeed this time. Every action, however small, which tries to change something bad, is already a victory.

Auntie Stella
What do you think of Auntie Stella’s reply? Do you agree with what she says?

Are there any problems you have at your school or organisation or in your community which you want to change? Work together to make a plan. Decide what you want to change and who can help you. Organise a meeting, and make an action plan like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution we want</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Who’s responsible?</th>
<th>By when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the problem?</td>
<td>What change do we want?</td>
<td>What must we do to achieve change? For example: hold meetings, talk to people who can help, organise a petition</td>
<td>What do we need? (like money, people to do the work or materials)</td>
<td>Who in our group is responsible for doing what? For example: Fadzai - organise meeting Jeff - make the posters Linda - help put them up</td>
<td>Date by when we agree to carry out the tasks, and when we want things to happen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Josephine

Marrying young does often cause problems, because young people are still changing and they don’t yet know what they want from life. But you should know that many women these days are, like you, refusing to have sex with their husbands without using condoms. Many women are saying NO to their husband’s unfaithfulness and NO to getting HIV because of it.

You are brave to be tough with Thulani to protect yourself, especially since you have a young child to consider too. One option is for you to use a female condom. But you can’t go on like this forever. You both need to have a test. Talk to Thulani about it again. Be understanding about his fears. Is there anyone else who could encourage him to go for a test? If not, go to a testing centre for advice.

If Thulani still refuses, you will have to make some big decisions – about what is important to you and what to do next. Tell your husband what you are thinking and find out whether he wants to save your marriage. If you do stay together, this is a good opportunity to talk about what you each need from your marriage. Your family or a counsellor may be able to help.

Good luck to both of you.

Auntie Stella
ROLEPLAY: In pairs pretend to be a husband and wife (even if you are two boys or two girls). Have a conversation either when the wife wants the husband to use a condom or when she wants him to go for an HIV test.

Afterwards, tell your group what happened. How did the ‘wives’ and ‘husbands’ feel? What did you learn from the conversations?

Is it easier for a girlfriend to ask her partner to use a condom or for a wife to ask her husband? Or is it the same? If it is different, why is this?

In your groups draw a husband and wife who are happy together. On your picture write down or draw all the things that make a good marriage. Show your picture to the other groups. Did you all have the same ideas?
Dear Sipiwe

Feeling sad is, unfortunately, a normal part of everybody’s life. Many young people have difficult lives because of poverty and violence. Even those with comfortable lives can feel unhappy.

As a teenager, your body is going through huge chemical changes and these can make your moods change from being happy to feeling sad and then back again – all in just a few hours! Perhaps some of your friends are feeling just like you – tell them about your problem and they’ll feel freer to talk too.

Some girls and women feel depressed before their monthly period – this is pre-menstrual tension (PMT). Ask a health worker or older woman about remedies.

There are practical things you can do to help deal with depression. Try not to pretend. It’s better to share your feelings – talk to friends and family. Regular exercise helps too. Get enough sleep and eat healthy food. Try to relax and do things you enjoy like singing or reading. And let yourself cry – it can make you feel better.

If none of these things work, you need proper medical help and counselling.

Good luck. You’re brave to ask for help, and I’m sure you can deal bravely with this depression too.

Auntie Stella
In the middle of a big page, draw a sad person. Around the person, draw all the things that can help to make them feel better. Draw the most helpful things near the person, and the others further away.

Tell your group about any times you’ve felt depressed, confused or irritable recently. Say if there was a reason for the sadness and and how it went away.

Decide on a time each week when you will tell each other how your week has been and how you’re feeling – and work out how you can help each other and where else you can go for help. (If you’re already meeting regularly, start your meeting with this activity.)

If you exercise less than three times a week, arrange with your friend to do something you enjoy – like walking or running.

Helping others is another way of making you feel good. Decide on two activities you want to do (like volunteering to help people at your church or helping younger children with their homework). Make a plan to do these activities. Afterwards discuss how it made you feel.
Dear Priscilla

I am sorry this has happened. But you’re not alone so please don’t harm yourself or the baby. Talk to someone you trust in your family or in your community. This person can help you tell your parents. Your parents will probably be shocked or angry at first, but parents usually help you later.

These are your options:

– Keep your baby with support from your family and, hopefully, your boyfriend. You can continue your studies when the baby is older. Or someone in your family may be happy to look after the baby while you continue with your schooling.

– Give the baby up for adoption. This way, someone who really wants a baby will have the joy of bringing up your child. Organisations can arrange this for you.

Please, Priscilla, don’t have an illegal abortion. They are VERY DANGEROUS and can cause infertility or death. Don’t put anything into your vagina, or let anybody else do this. And don’t think about dumping your baby; it is illegal and will only make you feel guilty and sad.

Think carefully before you act. I hope you get the support you need. Good luck.

Auntie Stella
In Zimbabwe, abortion is only legal in cases of rape and if the mother or baby is in danger. The process of obtaining a legal abortion is long and difficult. In some countries, like South Africa, women can have a legal abortion if they are less than 12 weeks pregnant. What do you think about this?

Organise a debate on this topic.

**ROLEPLAY:** Three people in the group do a roleplay where the person helping Priscilla tells her parents about the pregnancy. Anyone watching can stop the actors at any time, take the place of any actor and do something different. Afterwards, discuss what was most realistic and helpful to Priscilla.

What organisations or support groups do you know – in your area or elsewhere – that give help and advice to girls like Priscilla with unwanted pregnancies? Find out about them.

Are any of these organisations advocating for abortion to be legalised in your country? Ask them to come and talk to you about their work.
Dear Munyaradzi

Well done for wanting to protect yourself and your girlfriend from unwanted pregnancy, HIV and STIs. Many religious organisations encourage people to abstain from sex until they are married and do not encourage the use of condoms. But people in all religions are changing; they believe it is better to use a condom to prevent HIV. Some say that sex outside marriage may be a sin, but sex without a condom – risking your partner’s life – is also a sin because it goes against the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’.

If you and your girlfriend decide to sleep together, weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of using condoms. The health benefits are clear, but you have to consider your religious opinions.

On your easier question: Condoms do not have holes and HIV cannot pass through them. They can slip or break during sex which is why they are not considered 100 per cent safe. But, as long as you use them properly and every time, they are the best way we know to prevent transmission of HIV – other than abstaining and lifelong mutual faithfulness, which are 100 per cent safe. If you have had sex without a condom, think about having an HIV test before you start having sex with your girlfriend.

Auntie Stella
In March 2004 Bishop Kevin Dowling of the Catholic Diocese of Rustenburg, South Africa said:

‘Abstinence before marriage and faithfulness to a single partner within a stable marriage – obviously these are key to good living and to avoid infection. However, the church ministers in the real world, so the church should give people all the options, one of which is to use a condom, not as a contraceptive, but to prevent transmission of a death-dealing virus.’

Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?

Have a debate on this topic:

‘You can be religious but still have your own different opinions about things that affect your life and relationships.’

Talk to people in religious organisations who work with families and individuals affected by HIV and AIDS – what do they think about the use of condoms?

Do you have a group in your area where young people of different religions (or the same religion) can discuss and advise each other on the challenges in their lives? If not, how can you organise one? And how can you work together to help people in the community?
Dear Alice

There is nothing wrong with being gay. People who say it goes against their culture or religion don’t understand. Do not feel ashamed about it.

The first step is to accept who you are. Talk to someone who can help you be more confident. You are not alone. Gay people exist in all societies. If you hide your feelings because you’re afraid of other people laughing at you, others probably do the same.

So the second step is to find other gay people. It isn’t hard: ask, listen, read newspapers and magazines. Most major cities have gay organisations. Contact them. You’ll feel good when you meet people who feel the same as you!

Also, many gays find that their family and friends don’t reject them. In private, people often understand and accept. Remember, when you tell people something like this, wait until they’re relaxed and practise your ‘speech’ before to give you confidence. Some pastors are more tolerant than yours. They feel that if God created gays, the church should accept them. So, don’t feel so bad.

Good luck with finding someone to love!

Auntie Stella
ANSWERS: Gay people quiz

1 and 4 are opinions, 2 and 3 are facts.

Do you agree with Auntie Stella’s reply? Which of your ideas come from actually knowing gay people, and which ideas are from what people around you say?

Find out which organisations give advice and support to gay people. Ask someone from there to come and talk to your group and answer your questions. You can write questions if you’re shy to ask them directly.

Find out about your country’s constitution and laws. For example, does the constitution say that there must be ‘no discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation’? This means that gays must be treated like everybody else, by law. For example, a gay person can join the police, be a teacher or a mayor, like anyone else. Have a debate about this.
Dear Agnes

Period pains are common and I’m sorry yours are so bad. There are many things you can do to help:

– Rub your lower belly, and press the soft part of your hand between the thumb and first finger.
– Soak a thick cloth in hot water or use a hot-water bottle and put it on the sore part.
– Drink tea made from ginger or take other traditional remedies.
– If you can, carry on with your daily work and try to exercise and walk.
– Take a mild painkiller (like aspirin or paracetemol).

If the problem continues, ask a nurse or health worker about a low-dose contraceptive pill which will control the pain and decrease heavy bleeding. They are perfectly safe for teenage girls.

Don’t feel embarrassed if people know you’ve got your period. It is a natural part of being a girl or woman. Why not get together with your girlfriends and ask a female teacher if she can help solve the problem of facilities at school?

You have a right to education, and if this makes you and other girls miss school every month, you and the school need to work out a solution together.

Auntie Stella
**ACTION POINTS**

- **GIRLS:** Try out any of Auntie Stella’s advice if you have painful periods. Report back about how helpful it was.

- **BOYS:** Talk to sisters or girls in your class. Find out more about periods and share any worries you have.

- There are some places or situations in society where it is easy to change what we don’t like and others where we have very little control over what is happening. Look at the balloons below and divide them into three lists:
  - easy to change
  - possible to change
  - very difficult to change

Now choose three places or situations from your ‘easy to change’ or ‘possible to change’ lists. What do you want to change in them? How can you and others work together to make the changes happen?

Look at the Action Plan at the end of Card 29 and start organising!
Dear Nyarai

I’m sorry your boyfriend is no longer nice to you but, regrettably, this often happens with an older, richer man. ‘Sugar daddies’ like young girlfriends because they are sweet and don’t complain. Also, sometimes it is because they think young girls are free of HIV.

But the relationship is not equal, and when the man gets tired of the girl, he starts to break his promises and treat her badly. This is what is happening to you.

Having sex without condoms is very risky and herbs cannot cure HIV – if they could, the n’anga (healer) would be very rich indeed. Taking herbs to get rid of pregnancy can be dangerous and may not succeed.

I hope you decide to leave your boyfriend – this relationship cannot make you happy. Try to find a relationship where you are equal and you can say what you want.

Think about your future and how to make your dreams come true. If you learn other skills and earn some money, you can do a modelling course. Models need education too and they usually have other jobs so try to find something you can do to survive.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

• Look back at the talking points to see what reasons you gave for girls liking sugar daddies. For each one, find a way that girls can get this without getting into danger. For example: money and nice clothes – they can…

• ROLEPLAY: In pairs, act out the conversation when Nyarai tells Godfrey she doesn’t want to see him any more. What does he do? Afterwards, tell your group what happened and how you each felt when you were acting. What did you learn from the roleplays?

• Some people say that sugar daddies abuse young girls and should be punished. Others think the problem lies with the young girls who are greedy and go with sugar daddies in order to get luxuries. What do you think?

• In pairs or with your small groups, make up a song to show your ideas about sugar daddies. Arrange a time to sing it to the whole group.
Dear Farayi

Love at the age of 17 can be as serious as love at 27. But you do need to keep the rest of life going while also feeling all dreamy and romantic inside. Fortunately, millions of lovers have found that the first few crazy months of love do change into something calmer and deeper, so you may soon find it easier to concentrate on your books.

However, being aware of the problem is a great first step towards solving it. Talk to your girlfriend about your feelings and discuss how you can be together AND carry on with your studies.

Maybe you can set aside special times to see each other. Or agree that you’ll only see each other when you’ve finished studying a certain subject. Or, if she’s got exams too, you could try studying together – as long as you can keep your eyes on your books and your hands off each other! If your relationship is good, even boring tasks like weeding can be fun if you do them together.

Whatever you decide, you and your girlfriend can encourage each other to do your schoolwork. Your dreams in life – romantic and otherwise – will have a better chance if you can get through those exams.

Auntie Stella
ACTION POINTS

- Write a song or a poem about the good and bad things that love can do to you. Read or sing it to your group. Did most of you see the good or the bad side of love, or were they about the same?

- ‘It’s love that makes the world go round, but it doesn’t put bread on the table.’ Make up your own proverb about love. Which ones do you like best?

- In pairs, work out a weekly schedule. Put in times for study or work, sport or clubs, helping the family, reading and time off – that’s when you can see your partner. Be realistic.

- Sometimes our feelings – happy or sad – seem like a fast-flowing river after heavy rains, and we can’t get our feet on firm ground. If this ever happens to you, what helps you feel more balanced – praying, talking to a good friend, helping someone else, or doing sport, for example? Tell the group, and promise to support each other when you need help.
Dear Taurai

I can’t give you an answer about who to tell when you have HIV or AIDS; it is a big and difficult decision. Everyone must make their own choice. Some people tell nobody, others tell a close relative or friend, others tell many – and they do this at different stages. Whatever people choose is fine.

Many people feel happier when they share their feelings and some people, like your mother, are brave enough to speak out publicly. And for everybody with HIV or AIDS, having a counsellor or support group to talk to is really important.

However, until society becomes more open about HIV, telling people can have serious results, like losing your job, your friends or partner or even the place you stay. People need to balance the benefits against the possible losses for themselves personally, before they tell anyone they are HIV positive. If you have a job, you also need to learn your legal rights as an HIV positive worker.

Certainly I agree that children are usually happier when they know the truth, even if it’s sad.

So, thank you for helping many young people by being so brave and open. You and your mother’s story will give hope to many people.

Auntie Stella
• What do you think about Auntie Stella’s reply?

• List ideas for how you and your friends can fight discrimination against people with HIV or AIDS. (For example: drama, quizzes, debates, talks by people with HIV, T-shirts saying 'I have AIDS' or ‘My friend with AIDS is still my friend’). Choose the three best ones for your group and work out how you will carry out your ideas.

• **ROLEPLAY:** In your group, make up a play where people talk about someone with AIDS. Most people are nasty about the person with AIDS, but one person argues strongly to try to change the way they think. What happens in the end?

• Invite someone like Taurai and his mother to come and talk to you about the problems they’ve faced from other people’s attitudes to HIV and AIDS. Ask what has helped them deal with these attitudes.
Dear Joan

It sounds as if you have common acne or teenage pimples. It is a sign of maturity and most young people simply grow out of it. However, that does not help your immediate problem. Acne is difficult to cure outright, but it will definitely improve if you follow this advice:

– First, what you eat is important. Eat as much fruit and vegetables as possible and use whole food like brown bread and wholegrain ufu (roller meal). Avoid junk food – sweets and biscuits, oily food and fizzy drinks. Fruit or roasted or boiled maize are much better than buns and coke.

– Second, drink a lot of water. This cleanses your body.

– Third – and important – be gentle with your face. Don’t cover it in lotions and creams. Don’t squeeze your pimples. Wash your face gently with soap and warm water, and massage lightly. Rubbing your face gently with mealie-meal and water cleans skin and makes it smooth too.

Some teenagers may need medical help, such as an antibiotic from the clinic or doctor.

Try not to think about your pimples. Remember the good things about your body too. And don’t stop going out. People notice pimples much less than we think they do. Good luck!

Auntie Stella
 List the main things you eat. Divide them into good food and junk food. Work out when and why you eat junk food. How can you eat more good food?

 Draw a picture of yourself. Label all the good things about your body and the things it can do. For example: strong legs for football; big watchful eyes; good ears for listening to people’s problems; lovely white teeth; helpful hands for my family. Put in at least five labels.

 At the end, draw a great big smile on your face!
Dear Chipo

Well done for being brave enough to have an HIV test. Now you can do many things to care for yourself and the baby you are carrying. Most babies born to HIV positive mothers will not get HIV. Only three out of every ten babies get the virus. This happens while the baby is in the womb, during childbirth or through breastfeeding. Fortunately, there are a number of ways to lower the risk.

Firstly, clinics and hospitals in Zimbabwe offer a drug called Nevirapine free to HIV positive pregnant women. This drug makes it harder for HIV to infect the baby during childbirth and protects the baby in the first three days. Ask the clinic about their Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT) programme. Also, either feed your baby on milk formula or find out everything about how to breastfeed safely by feeding your baby on breastmilk only (absolutely nothing else, not even water) for the first six months. Then at six months, you must stop breastfeeding completely and start the baby on other foods.

Also help your baby by looking after yourself as well as you can – ask at the clinic for advice. The clinic will also be able to tell you when your baby should be tested for HIV and how best to keep her healthy.

Good luck with motherhood!

Auntie Stella
**ACTION POINTS**

- **ROLEPLAY:** An HIV positive mother has decided to breastfeed her baby for the first six months and she now has to tell her husband’s mother that she cannot give the child any other food or drink.

  Do you think this is a problem in real life? What can be done about it?

- Make a list of all the advantages and disadvantages of breastfeeding if the mother is HIV positive. Make a similar list for giving the baby milk formula. What would you do if you were in this situation?

- What do you think it is like to be an HIV positive mother with a sick baby? Find out about any programmes in your community to help women in this situation. Do they need more help? What can you do?

- See card 26 for more information on how to live positively.