

AUNTIE STELLA

QUESTION AND ANSWER CARDS

ENGLISH VERSION

Updated February 2019



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This PDF file includes the updated English version of the 42 question and answer cards that make up the youth reproductive health pack, *Auntie Stella: Teenagers talk about sex, life and relationships*. The pack was first produced in 2006 and has been updated to take into account new developments and issues in the field of youth reproductive health. This includes new information on antiretrovirals and living positively, menstrual hygiene, cervical cancer and more. Major changes have been made to Cards 14, 15, 16, 19, 22, 26, 29, 31, 35, 38 and 40.

Please make sure you download the 2006 Facilitator's Guide and the 2019 Updated List of Topics and Themes for a complete set.

Auntie Stella: Teenagers talk about sex, life and relationships, also available as a printed pack with laminated question and answer cards, is an interactive toolkit targeted at young people in east and southern Africa aged 12-19 years, both in and out of school. The pack uses a series of 42 letters, each written in the style of a missive to a newspaper agony aunt, covering topics such as physical and emotional changes in adolescence, relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex, social and economic pressures to have sex, gender roles, unwanted pregnancy, STIs, HIV and AIDS. Young people work in small groups to read and discuss a letter card. When ready, they read Auntie Stella's reply, doing a number of interactive activities along the way, including roleplays, games, quizzes, etc. During this process, participants not only share experiences and build a sense of comradeship, but also increase their skills and confidence to communicate, negotiate, plan and strategise.

The pack is available in English, Shona and Ndebele, and has also been translated and adapted into Chichewa, Portuguese and Swahili. You can access these translated versions, and other information about 'Auntie Stella', online at <http://www.tarsc.org/publications/>

To find out more about the Auntie Stella programme, to read some of the stories of change linked to using Auntie Stella, or to place an order for a copy of the toolkit, please contact admin@tarsc.org

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 17-year-old girl and I am in love with a boy two years older than me. My problem is that he always wants me to satisfy him in ways that hurt my feelings. We kiss and hug which I like very much but I don't let him have sex with me. He says he'll go blind if I continue to make him stop half-way.

My girlfriends tell me that if I want to keep him, I have to have sex with him. I'm worried that he will sleep with other girls if I say no, so should I sleep with him? He says everyone has sex at our age.

Zandile



TALKING POINTS

- Do you and your friends ever find yourselves in the same situation as Zandile and her boyfriend – where one partner wants to have sex and the other doesn't? What do you do about it?
- Ask two members of your group to act out the conversation between Zandile and her boyfriend. Zandile says that she loves him but doesn't want to have sex. Her boyfriend tries to convince her she should have sex with him.
At the end of the roleplay, ask the actors what it felt like to be in their situation. Did they resolve their differences? If not, ask them to go back into their roles and try to find a solution.
- Zandile's boyfriend says he'll go blind if he has to stop half-way. What does he mean by 'half-way'? What other things do boys say will happen if they:
 - a get sexually excited from touching and kissing and then stop before having sex and
 - b don't have sex?Which of these things are true?
Do people say similar things about girls?
- Are there other ways that people can give each other sexual pleasure without the boy's penis going inside his partner? Would you recommend these?

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a guy about to turn 14 and there is a problem which is really bothering me. It's my penis which is too small. I am worried because it is not growing like others I have seen and that this will affect my life when I have sex later. Please tell me Auntie, what is the correct size penis for a 14-year-old boy because this is making me miserable.

Peter



TALKING POINTS

- Why do you think boys worry about the size of their penises? Is penis size also important to girls?
- Why do boys have different size penises? What does it depend on:
 - their age?
 - their physical build (if they're heavy or light, solid or skinny)?
 - the penis size of their father or brothers?
 - whether they have had sex or not?
 - other causes?
- Is there a 'correct' size for a 14-year-old boy like Peter?
- Do you think the size of a man's penis affects how he can satisfy his partner when they have sex? What else is important?
- What other worries do teenage boys – and girls – have about their bodies? Go into girls-only or boys-only groups. Draw a picture of your bodies. Mark the parts you and your friends might worry about. What would you say to someone with these worries to make them feel better? Talk about your ideas and try to decide which are the best and why.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 15-year-old girl, living with my older sister and her husband. This *baba mukuru* (brother-in-law) is very cheerful and is respected in my family. He has always been teasing me and talking about *chiramu*. Recently he said that he wants me to sleep in their bedroom, and that I should do this because it is our tradition.

What should I do? Is this right? I am afraid he wants to have sex with me. But if I say no, he will tell me to leave.

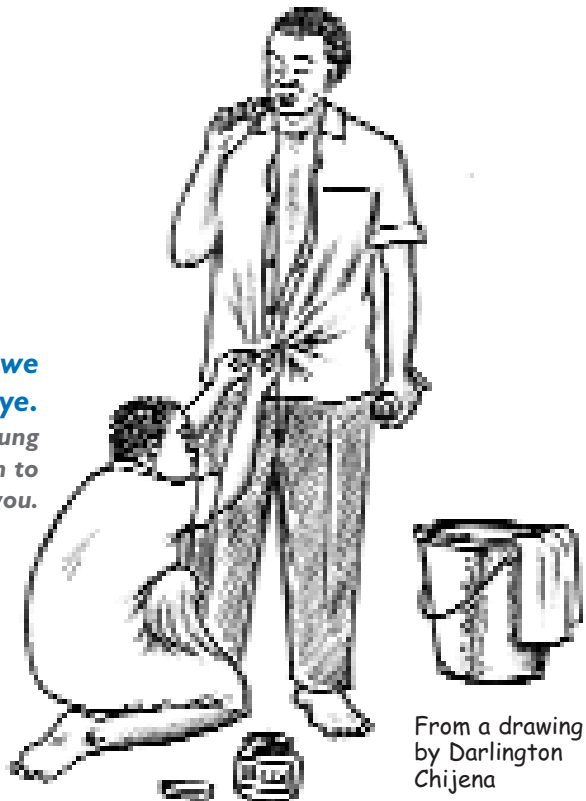
Patricia

TALKING POINTS

- Discuss what you know about *chiramu/sibale*?
Do you have a similar tradition in your community?
What is supposed to happen with this tradition?
What actually happens?
- ‘Respect your elders’– do you think young people should always respect their elders, even if their elders ask them to do something dangerous or harmful?
How can young people get support in these situations?
- What advice would you give Patricia?
Who can help her?

***Gudo guru peta muswe
vaduku vakutye.***

*Be respectful to young
people if you want them to
respect you.*



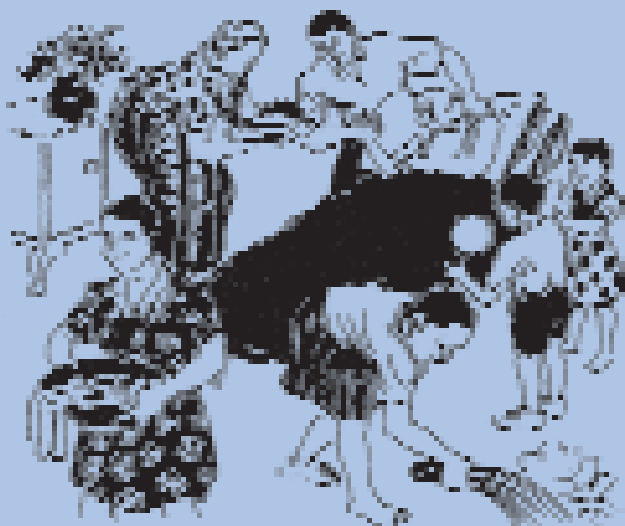
From a drawing
by Darlington
Chijena

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 15 year-old girl and I am very worried about this AIDS. Two years ago my uncle's wife died. Then he came to live with us. Now he is very ill and my mother told me he has AIDS. He has lost so much weight and is looking very bad. He stays in bed all day.

Now I am worried that I might catch the disease because he doesn't have his own plate or toilet and I often help my mother to look after him. Please tell me what I should do because I am worried that if I stay around him and breathe the same air I will also get this illness. Auntie, should I move out?

Petronella



TALKING POINTS

- Do you know how HIV is spread? Make a list of how you and other people think you can get HIV.
Go carefully through the list and cross out any ideas that are not based on facts. Make sure you and your friends know the difference between HIV and AIDS.
- Is Petronella right to be afraid about getting AIDS from her uncle? Is there a big risk, some risk or a very small risk? Is there anything she needs to do to protect herself?
- What can Petronella's friends and neighbours do to help her uncle and her family? Who else can help?
- If there are people who are sick with AIDS in your community:
 - a Who looks after them?
 - b What problems do they have and why?
 - c What problems are there for the people who care for them and why?
 - d What solutions can you think of to these problems?

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 15 year-old boy and the oldest in my family. My father left us a long time ago and my mother died of AIDS some months back. There are four younger brothers and sisters after me and now I am the one who must look after them.

My mother didn't leave a will so, when she died, my uncles took all our property. We are only left with our hut, a few clothes and some pots.

Sometimes one pastor from a church brings food for us and sometimes I help some women with their farm work, but it is not enough. Often I cannot sleep because I am worried so much about how we can live. There are some other kids like me but we never talk to each other.

Please help me, Auntie, as this problem is haunting me day and night.

Lovemore

TALKING POINTS

- Do you know any young people with problems like this? What are they doing to support themselves and their families? Who is helping them?
- What would normally happen to children in this situation in your community? Who would help?
- What is a will? Do older people in your community write wills? What happens when someone dies without writing a will?
- What do children and young people need in order to survive and to grow up happy and healthy and able to do the best they can in life? Make a list. Then put your ideas in order, with the most important ones first.
- What advice would you give Lovemore?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 16-year-old boy in Form 3 at a boarding school. My problem is this: I know many girls but I would like a proper girlfriend so we can enjoy love together. All my friends boast when they speak about having sex and I would also like to be doing this.

I am afraid that I am getting so old that when I finally find a girlfriend she'll laugh at my failure to do it well.

I am thinking seriously about going to see a *n'anga* (traditional healer) for love potions for these girls to like me very much. Please auntie, give me some advice.

Titus



TALKING POINTS

- What is the difference between love and sex?
- Do you think it is true that Titus' friends have already had sex? If it isn't true, why are they pretending?
- What successes do you pretend about? Is this helpful or harmful for you and your friends?
- Why do you think you and your friends want to be the same as each other and do the same things? What is good about this? What dangers are there in this?
- Do you ever disagree with what your friends are doing? Do you tell them about it or keep quiet?
- Should Titus go to the *n'anga*? What other advice would you give him?

***Ukugijima akusikufika.
Kumhanya hakusi kusvika.***

*Running is not arriving.
Don't rush into doing something or you
might get hurt in the process or never make it.*

Dear Auntie Stella

I broke up with my boyfriend a few months ago because I knew he was sleeping with other girls. Then a week ago he came to say that he has an STI (sexually transmitted infection) and that I should go for a check-up in case he gave it to me.

Anyway, I went to the clinic yesterday and after some tests the nurse told me I have an STI. She said I **MUST** take all the pills because, if I don't, I may end up not being able to have children.

Now, that really scares me! I want to have lots of kids when I'm older and have found the right guy. I'd die if I found out I could never get pregnant.

Auntie, is it true? Do you think I may never have kids? Please tell me.

Fortunate

TALKING POINTS

- Is it true that a boy or girl who has an untreated STI for a long time may become infertile? What else causes infertility?
- What would you worry about most if you found that you were infertile and couldn't have children?
- When a couple cannot have children, do you think it is most often because:
 - the man is infertile?
 - the woman is infertile?
 - it could be either the man or the woman?
- Do you think a couple can be happy without children? Why or why not?
- Do you know any ways that infertility can be cured?



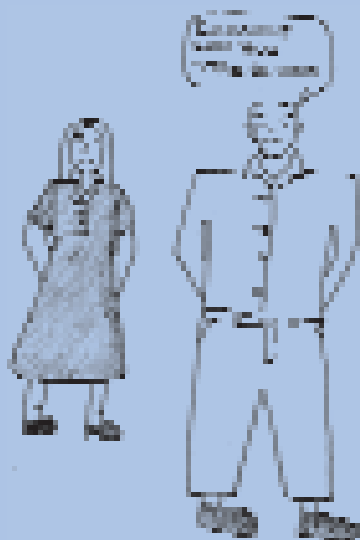
Dear Auntie Stella

I am a girl aged 15 doing Form 2 at boarding school. My science teacher came to teach at the school only this year. Last year we had no science teacher and he offered to give some of us extra lessons to make up for work we had missed.

After one of these lessons the teacher asked me to stay behind to help clear up the charts. As soon as my friends had gone he began to touch my private parts and tell me that he loved me. I was too embarrassed and scared to tell him to stop.

Now I am afraid to go to his classes in case he does the same again. What can I do? I am falling behind with my work.

Sithabile



From a
drawing by
Pride Moyo

TALKING POINTS

- Has anything like this ever happened to anyone you know? Only to girls, or also to boys? What happened to the teacher?
- Should Sithabile...
 - stop worrying since it isn't important?
 - keep quiet but stop going to science?
 - tell someone immediately: a close friend, her parents, another teacher or the head of the school?
 - tell everybody, including the police, and try and get the teacher fired?
 - try and persuade the teacher to marry her?
 - do something else? What?
- What can Sithabile do if the teacher tries this again?



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a 15-year-old boy, and I've got a good friend called Misheck. I've known him for ages. We live in the same area, we're in the same class and we both play football for the first team in school.

Last week he told me that he's gay and that he loves me and he wants me to be his boyfriend. I just couldn't believe it! He doesn't look funny and he's good at sports, so how can he be gay?

I just don't know what to do. I really like him but only as a friend – not anything else at all. I'm scared that he'll try to kiss me or something awful like that. I'm also really scared that if other people find out about him they'll think I'm gay too, even though I've got a girlfriend.

I don't think I can be his friend any more but we're still in the same class and in the same team. What can I do? Should I tell someone about him, at school or in his family? Please help me.

Samuel

TALKING POINTS

- Do you think Misheck was right to tell Samuel how he felt? Why or why not? How do you think he felt before he told Samuel? And what about now, after he has told him?
- What do you think about Samuel's worries? Sympathetic, angry or something else? And what advice would you give him?
- What ideas do people you know have about gay men and women? What names do they have for them? Are most of the ideas positive or negative? Which ones do you think are true?
- Choose one or more of these roleplays.
 - Samuel tells everyone about Misheck (four or more people)
 - Samuel tells Misheck he can't be his friend any more (two people)
 - Samuel tells Misheck that he'll still be his friend, but not his boyfriend (two people)

At the end, all the actors must say how they felt in their roles. Then all discuss which solution was best.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 17-year-old boy doing Form 4. I am old enough to propose love to girls but I am still a scholar. My father always warned me that if he ever saw me or heard rumours that I was in love with a girl, it would be the end of my schooling.

As I reached my teens I became attracted to girls and turned a deaf ear to what my father said. I started to propose love to girls and had sex with one of them. Now this girl has told me she is pregnant and says she will be coming to stay with me as my wife. I have not yet told my father about this because I am afraid of losing my education.

Please Auntie help me on this because I am worrying daily.

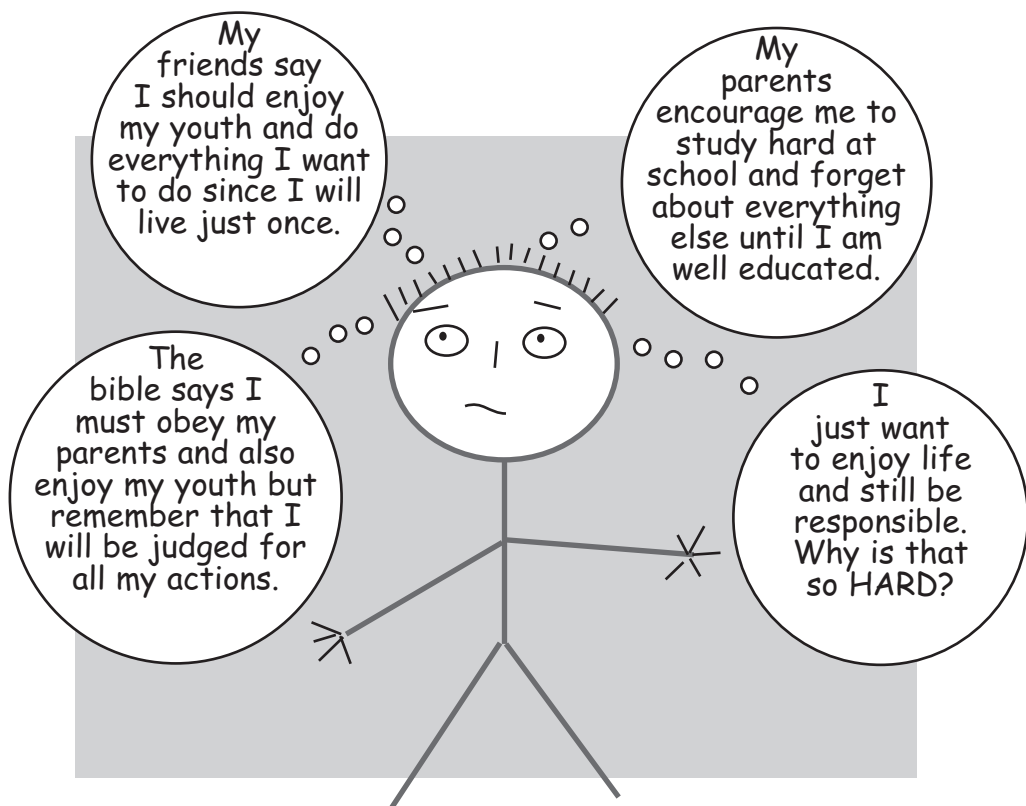
Vusi

Elomzali kaliweli phansi.

*Never ignore advice from parents,
as it has relevance to our lives.*

TALKING POINTS

- Why do you think Vusi didn't listen to his father's advice?
Do young people usually follow their parents' advice?
- What can Vusi and his girlfriend do now?
- Look at the picture below, from a drawing by Takatso Sibanda, a student from Bulawayo. Do you think it is possible to enjoy life and still be responsible? How?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a guy aged 15 doing Form 2. My problem is that when I see a nice girl or just think about sex, my penis becomes erect and uncontrollable and I am afraid people can notice it. Some of my friends tell me to masturbate but others say that you can go blind, or you will never have children if you do it. I am also worried because some church people say that it is sinful and people will be punished if they do this thing. In the first place, is masturbation good? I would be glad if you could tell me its effects before I do it.

I would greatly appreciate your help.

Simba

*'Oh girls, you are
giving me a
problem!
How can I stop
this or its nature?'*

From a poem by
Phellonu Dube



TALKING POINTS

- Do you think a lot of boys have erections (get hard penises) when they think about sex? What can they do to stop themselves from getting erect if this makes them embarrassed?
- What is masturbation? How would you describe it to a younger brother or sister who asked you? How do you think it can help young people?

QUIZ: Masturbation

Mark each statement TRUE, FALSE or NOT SURE.

(Check your answers on the answer card.)

- 1 Masturbation makes people want to have sex all the time.
- 2 Masturbation is a safe and natural way to relieve sexual desire and get to know your body.
- 3 Boys who masturbate use up their sperm, so they can't make someone pregnant.
- 4 Masturbation will make you go blind or crazy.
- 5 Girls can't masturbate.
- 6 If you masturbate, hair will grow on your hands.
- 7 If you masturbate, you'll never be able to have sex properly with a partner.

- What advice would you give Simba?

Dear Auntie Stella

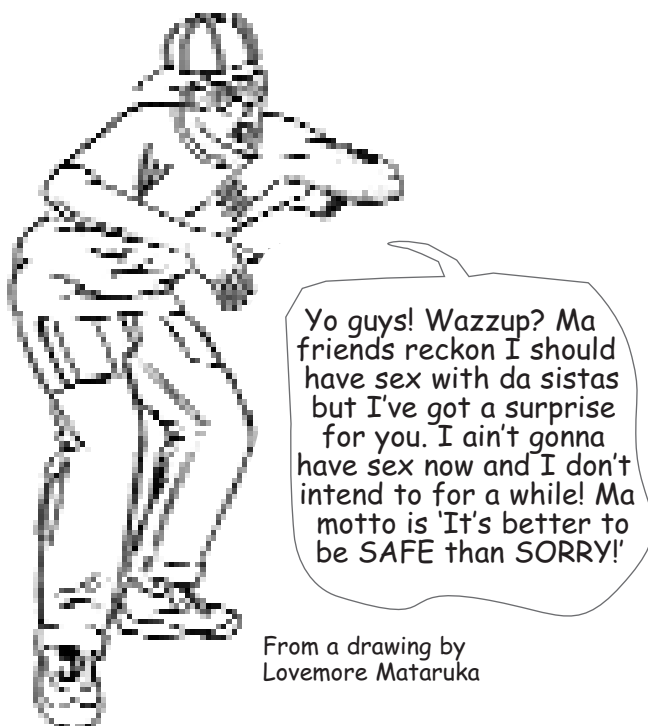
I am a boy at school and I want to have sex with my girlfriend. I buy her lunch at school, pay bus fare and sometimes even give her gifts but she won't have sex with me. My friends say that other girls do this. Why can't she give me sex to say thank you for the things I do for her?

Themba



TALKING POINTS

- **GIRLS:** Do you feel you have to have sex with your boyfriend if he gives you presents or money?
BOYS: Do you expect your girlfriend to have sex with you because you buy things for her?
- Why do you think Themba's girlfriend refuses to have sex with him? What advice would you give Themba? And what advice would you give his girlfriend?
- Some say boys and girls don't want the same thing from relationships. What do they each want? Do you all agree?
- Look at the picture below. What do you think of Lovemore's motto? Write your own motto – about sex, life and relationships. Whose is the coolest?



From a drawing by
Lovemore Mataruka

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a boy aged 17 and my problem is that I have developed pimples around the head of my penis. When I was in Form 2, our teacher told us that this is an STI and a person with this problem will end up mentally disturbed if it is not treated. Is this true? What type of disease is this, and can it be cured? I'm afraid to go to the clinic because everybody says they are very harsh to teenagers if you have this kind of disease.

Jabulani



TALKING POINTS

- What do you think Jabulani's problem is? Do you think he has an STI? What advice would you give him?

QUIZ : Sexually-transmitted infections (STIs)

Are these statements TRUE or FALSE?

(Check your answers on the answer card)

- 1 You can't get an STI if you've never had sex.
- 2 You can cure STIs by having sex with a virgin.
- 3 Using a condom is the only way to avoid getting STIs.
- 4 All STIs make it painful to pass urine (wee).
- 5 Most STIs can be cured easily if you get treated quickly.

- Why are some health workers rude to young people if they have an STI? What can you do about it?

Dear Auntie Stella

I'm 18 and my boyfriend is 20. We've been having sex for four months now. In the beginning we used condoms but my boyfriend didn't like them. After two months he said we should trust each other and stop using condoms, so I decided to go on the pill because I didn't want to get pregnant.

Now I've found out that one of his previous girlfriends is sick with AIDS. I'm terrified that my boyfriend has this sickness and that he's given it to me! I don't know what to do. I've heard on the radio about getting tested, but people say they ask you difficult questions, the results are sometimes wrong and other people will know your results.

I can't talk to my boyfriend or anyone else about this. And, also, I'm not sure I even want to know my status. What will I do then?

Auntie, please help me – I just worry all the time.

Florence

TALKING POINTS

- How often do people act like Florence and her boyfriend, where they start using condoms but then stop? Why do they do this? What are the dangers?
- What should Florence do now?
 - Tell her boyfriend the truth about her worries and insist on returning to condoms?
 - Get an HIV test secretly and then decide?
 - Tell her boyfriend she wants both of them to be tested?
 - Continue having unprotected sex?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each choice?

- What do you know about HIV testing? What happens at the test centre? What are the staff like? How long does it take to get the results?

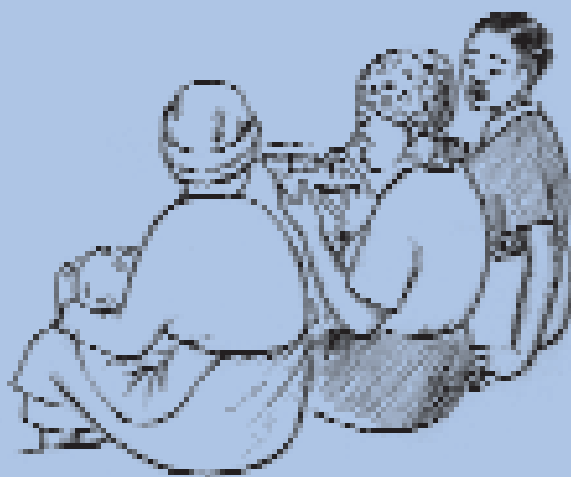


Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 15-year-old girl and I am worrying about something which I heard. My aunt said that one of her neighbours is very sick with cervical cancer and it is a disease which can kill women.

I never heard of it before, and I am really worried. How do people get it and is it true that it can kill you?

Shamiso



TALKING POINTS

- Have you heard about cervical cancer (or cancer of the cervix)?
- Do you know what causes it?
- Do you know if it is common in Zimbabwe?
- What can girls and women do to avoid getting it?
- Can it be cured?



Dear Auntie Stella

I feel really terrible and have nobody to talk to. When I was younger my uncle always hugged us children nicely and gave us presents. But last year, when I was twelve, he sometimes followed me into the bush when I was fetching water, and touched my breasts and under my skirt. I was frightened but he said it must be our secret or we would both get into trouble.

Then this weekend he came for a funeral and everyone was drinking beer. In the night, when I came back from the toilet, he was waiting. He grabbed me, pushed me down and had sex in me. It was so painful but he hit me when I cried.

Afterwards he said it was my fault because I was wearing a bra and that made him need sex.

Auntie, please help me. I feel bad and dirty and I keep remembering it. I'm too afraid to tell my parents. They will be very angry with me because my uncle helps us with food and money. But what if he does it again? I'm so scared. What can I do?

Sibongile

TALKING POINTS

- What is rape? Is it common in your community? Are the rapists usually strangers or members of the family?
- In Sibongile's story, who was responsible for what happened? Why did Sibongile's uncle behave like that?
- Is a girl or woman ever to blame for being raped, for example, if she is wearing sexy clothes? Organise a debate around this question.
- What advice would you give Sibongile about what to do now?
- What would you do if you were raped? (boys and girls should answer). Would you go to the police? What are the advantages and disadvantages of reporting a rape?

**Umntwana
ongakhaliyo ufela
embelekweni**

*Keeping silent can destroy
your life; speaking out can
relieve you from torments
and depression.*



Dear Auntie Stella

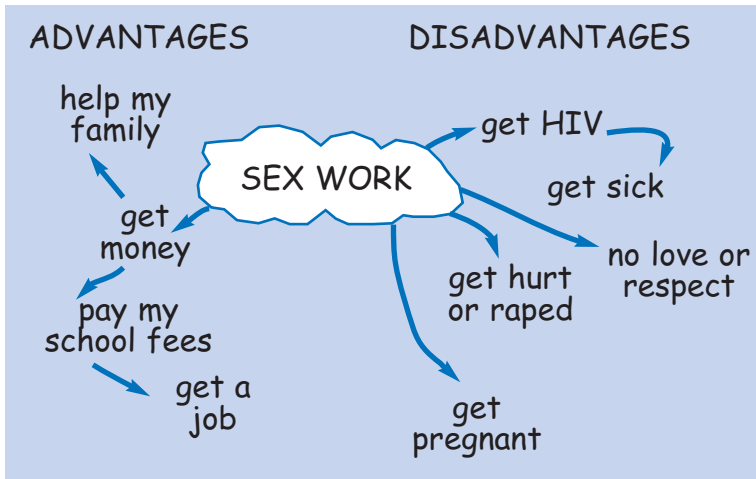
I am a 19 year-old girl, wanting to do O Levels this year. My parents are late and I stay with my grandmother. My uncle used to send money for my school fees but last year he also died and no one else can help me. I really want to complete school and do my exams so I can get a job, but I cannot find the money for the fees. Also the exams are too expensive.

Is it right to have sex for money because I can't think of any other way to complete my education? In this place there are many men who will pay for sex, but I am afraid of this work. My friend who does it told me that sometimes the men refuse to pay enough and one man also beat her up. Please, Auntie, help me to solve this problem.

Similo

TALKING POINTS

- Work in pairs. One of you is Similo, one is a man who wants to pay her to have sex with him. (Maybe she wants him to use a condom, but he disagrees.)
 - a Have a conversation.
 - b Afterwards, tell the group what was said in your conversation.
 - c Also say how you felt when you were acting this out.
 - d Finally, discuss anything you learnt from doing this.
- Draw a flow chart, like the one below, to show all the advantages and disadvantages of doing sex work for someone in Similo's situation. Is the money worth the risks?



- If Similo lived in your area, what else could she do to earn money or get help with her school and exam fees?

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a boy of 15 and I have a problem which I hope is easy for you to solve. I have never slept with a girl but I often experience dreams about girls. When I wake up from this I find there is a sticky wet place because I have 'come' from my penis. This happens even if I am not thinking about sex.

Now I am worried that if I get married this might affect my relationship with my wife since it happens three or four times a week. I am feeling guilty because of these dreams but I do not know how to stop them.

Is there something wrong with my body, or is it my fault that I keep having these dreams?

Edson

TALKING POINTS

- Do you know if this often happens to boys?
- What do you think causes 'wet dreams'?
- Do you think these dreams mean that...
 - Edson is perfectly normal?
 - Edson should go to the clinic?
 - Edson must have sex soon before he gets sick?
- Will Edson still have wet dreams when he gets married or starts having sex?



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm 19 years old with one daughter aged three years. My boyfriend was older – he left me when I got pregnant but I know he is very sick now from AIDS. I stay in the rural areas with my grandmother. We grow some maize when there is rain and also I sell kapenta (dried fish). But the money is not enough.

Mostly I am OK but last year I started losing weight and sometimes I feel weak and tired. A few months ago, my aunt took me to the clinic to have an HIV test. It was then that I found out I was HIV positive. The nurse then put me on these drugs, called ARVs. She said they will make me better, but I don't know whether this is true. I know about so many people who have died of this disease.

My biggest worry is who will look after my child when I die, because my grandmother is old and sometimes sick. I want to see my daughter go to school and be happy and well.

Please tell me, auntie, will these drugs really help me?

Thandiwe

TALKING POINTS

- Discuss what you know about anti-retrovirals (ARVs). Do you think it's true that ARVs will make Thandiwe better? Will Thandiwe be able to see her daughter grow up?
- How much information is available about ARVs? If there isn't much information, why is this? What can you do to find out more?



ARVs give us HOPE!

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 15-year-old boy and I lodge in the town close to my school. My parents work in a mine about 40kms away. Sometimes my parents are late in sending me money to pay the rent and then the landlord's wife comes into my room asking me for sex. I am scared that if I say no she will throw me out and I won't have anywhere to stay. So far I've always managed to make excuses to get her out of my room before she gets too 'hot' but things are getting worse. I can't tell anyone about this and I don't know what to do. If the landlord finds her in my room I am sure he will blame me.

Oliver

TALKING POINTS

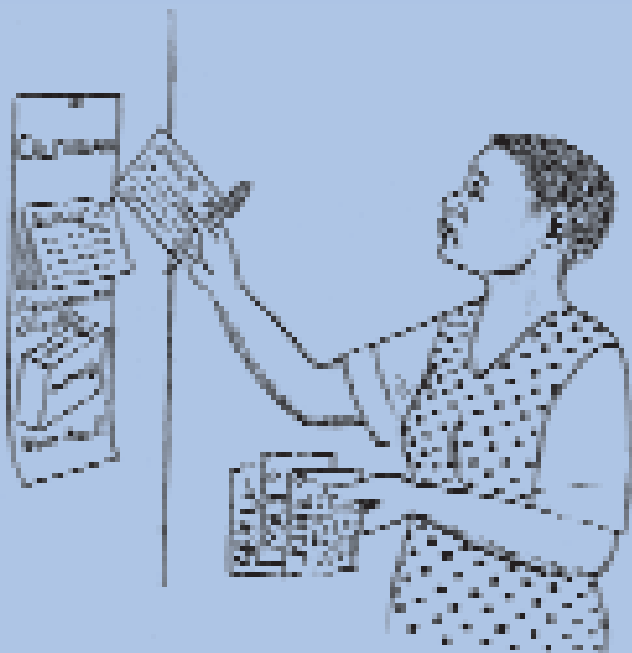
- Do you think boys can be raped. By women? By men?
- What does society say about these boys? Is it any different if a girl is raped?
- What is the difference between rape and indecent assault?
- Who should Oliver tell about this? What else can he do?
- How can his parents help?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a girl aged 15 years old. I started my periods when I was 13 years old. Now my problem is that I haven't had my periods for the last four months. I am a virgin and have never had a boyfriend. Is there something wrong with me? My friends say that I am infertile. Is this true? Please help because I'm scared that maybe I can't have children.

Pauline



TALKING POINTS

- Do most girls you know have regular periods (once a month) or irregular ones?

GIRLS: Tell your group about yours.

BOYS: Share what you know.

Discuss the reasons why some girls have irregular periods like Pauline.

- Do you think it is likely that missing periods means that Pauline is infertile?
- What other beliefs about boys, girls, sex, pregnancy or similar topics do you know about in your community? Make a list. For example, if you have periods every two weeks, you'll have twins or if a boy has hair on his face, it means he has had sex.

Which ones do you agree with, and which are myths (ideas many people believe, but they aren't true)?

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, I take my ARVs regularly 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.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 16 year old boy in Form 3. I have a big problem because I am very shy with girls. Sometimes I can't even look at them. My friends keep telling me if I smoke *mbanje* I will find it easier to approach girls. All my friends have girlfriends and I feel left out and lonely. I want a girlfriend, but I don't want to smoke *mbanje*, so what can I do?

Philani



TALKING POINTS

- Is shyness a problem for many teenagers? Is it more common in boys or in girls?
- Do a lot of people you know only want girlfriends or boyfriends because everyone else has them? Is this a good reason to have a relationship?
- Will *mbanje* help Philani? Why or why not? What about alcohol or other drugs?
- What advice can you give Philani...
 - a about overcoming his shyness?
 - b about making friends with girls?
 - c about smoking *mbanje*?
 - d about having girlfriends at his age?

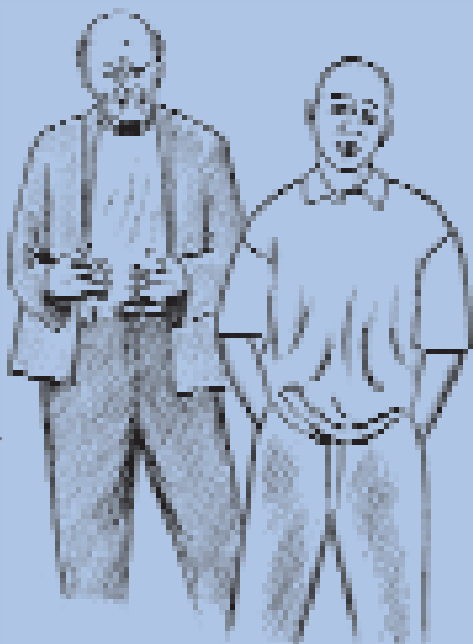
Dear Auntie Stella

I am an 18-year-old boy and my problem is that my parents are interfering in my life. They keep telling me who I can have as my friends and warning me all the time about not having sex before marriage. They are so busy telling me what I can and cannot do that I don't feel like I can ask them any questions or share my problems with them. My uncle lives very far away so I don't have anyone older I can talk to and ask for advice. What can I do?

David

Kurauone.

*When you grow up
you experience and
see the reality of
things in life.*



TALKING POINTS

- Do most teenagers you know get on well or badly with their parents?
- What about you? How do you get on with your mother and your father?
 - a Do you find it easy to talk freely to them?
 - b What difficulties are there between you and them?
 - c Do you get on better with your father or your mother?
- How do your parents treat you? Can you think of any reasons for their behaviour? Do they treat boys and girls differently? If yes, why do you think they do this?
- What advice would you give to other teenagers on ways to get on better with difficult parents?
- Do you have other adults you can talk openly with? Who? What makes it easy for you to talk to them?

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a schoolboy aged 17. I have a girlfriend and we started to sleep with each other a few months ago. During the last holidays I went to visit my uncle in Bulawayo and there I met another young lady outside the beerhall. We had sex together only once. After returning home I developed an STI.

In science class we were told that you should always tell your partner if you have an STI. I have read this in other places too. But why should I tell my girlfriend? She will be angry with me. Won't she notice when we're having sex now that there is something wrong without me saying anything? I don't want to lose my girlfriend. What should I do?

Leroy

TALKING POINTS

- Should Leroy tell his girlfriend? What could happen if he doesn't tell her? And if he does?
- What would you want Leroy to do if you were his partner?
- How would you feel if your boyfriend or girlfriend slept with someone else? What would you do?
- How common are STIs among young people you know? What is the cause of this? Can it be prevented?
- Can you tell when someone has an STI? What signs are there (for men and women)?



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm an 18-year-old woman and I sell vegetables at a market. I just went for an HIV test and found out that I'm positive. I stay with my auntie because my mother is late and my father left when I was young. I'm too ashamed to tell her, or my friends or anyone at the market, because they often joke about people with AIDS. I also fear that my aunt will be very angry and also sad.

I can't remember what the counsellor said at the VCT centre. What am I supposed to do now? Is there anything that can help me, in addition to taking my ARV pills? Should I eat any special food? Are there special groups for HIV positive people? I was learning soap-making and other skills but can I continue now or should I just stop and get ready to die?

I don't feel sick at all, but I'm so worried that I can't eat or sleep properly. It feels as if my life is already over. I wanted to have an ordinary life - find someone to love, have children - but of course that can't happen now. And must I stop having sex? Sometimes I think it's best to kill myself now than wait to die from AIDS. Auntie, please help me – there is no-one else I can talk to.

Charity

TALKING POINTS

- What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?
- Do many people have HIV or AIDS in your area? Can they speak openly about it? Why? Why not?
- If you found out you were HIV positive, what would you be most afraid of?
- Should Charity just wait to die? How would you answer her questions about living with HIV?
- Make a list of all the things people say about people living with HIV and AIDS. Divide them into those that are supportive and those that are critical. Which list is longer? Why do you think this is?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a girl aged 16 and I was going out with my boyfriend for four months. He always wanted to have sex and I said no. But then one time it happened. I didn't even enjoy it. That was two months ago and I haven't seen my period since then. We only had sex once, without a condom, but my friends say I can't get pregnant from this. Is that true?

I also heard some girls talking about a 'morning after' pill that can stop pregnancy if you have sex by mistake or are forced. Is it too late for me to take it? I don't want to do anything dangerous.

Please help me. I don't know what to do.

Nyaradzo



TALKING POINTS

- Do you know how to prevent pregnancy? Do this quiz to test your knowledge.

QUIZ: Pregnancy

Which of these statements are true, and which are false?

(Check the answers at the bottom of the page.)

- 1 A girl can't get pregnant the first time she has sex.
- 2 You don't get pregnant if you have sex standing up.
- 3 You can't get pregnant if the man pulls out before he comes (ejaculates).
- 4 You can't get pregnant if you wash or wee (pass urine) straight after sex.
- 5 The girl can't get pregnant if she hasn't started her periods.
- 6 You can't get pregnant if the boy is under 15.

- What do you know about the 'morning after' pill, what it does and how you can get it?
- Make a list of the things boys say to convince girls to have sex. Write strong replies to each one. Practise conversations. Who can say no most strongly? What helps you to do this?

ANSWERS: ALL the statements are false. If you thought any were TRUE, you may need to protect yourself or your girlfriend/better against pregnancy.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a teenage boy and I am very much in love with a girl at school called Susie. We work hard at our studies and we have decided that we will get married after our O levels. Our problem is that her parents have pledged her to another man (*kuzvarira / kubeletha*). She has told her parents that she wants to marry me, but they say she must do what they tell her.

What can we do? If she continues to say no, they will say she is not their daughter. This man is older and very rich. I think Susie's parents want her to marry him for his money. They're already talking about *lobola* (bride price) and how much he will pay them.

Are parents allowed to force a girl to marry someone she doesn't want? Please help us.

Farai

TALKING POINTS

- Are there arranged marriages in your culture? Are they like Susie's or different?
- Some people think *lobola* (bride price) strengthens the ties between two families, some say it abuses women's rights and others believe it has become too commercialised. What do you think?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of:
 - a arranged marriages, and
 - b marriages where people choose their own partners?
- Are there any ways that Farai and Susie can save her from a marriage she doesn't want? Discuss their choices and advise them on the best approach.
- How would you feel if your parents arranged a marriage for you? (boys and girls both answer)



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a 17 year old girl writing O levels this year. My good friend, Loveness, who is 16, was in my class until last month. Last term, our maths teacher offered her extra lessons because she wasn't doing well. But after a few lessons he proposed love to her. She couldn't say no – he was her teacher and she was afraid he'd blame her. She fell pregnant and was expelled from school. But the teacher hasn't been punished at all.

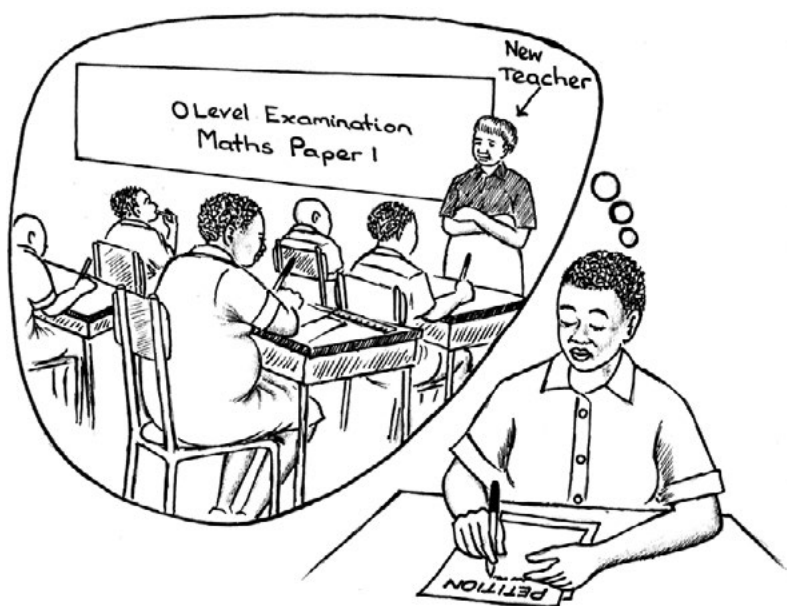
Me and my friends don't think this is fair! Why did Loveness get punished? Surely the teacher is more to blame? We are having a meeting to discuss what to do. We want Loveness to be allowed back to school and we want this teacher to be punished. We are thinking of writing a petition to the school board.

Some people think we can't interfere because the school and parents will decide what to do about Loveness and the teacher. But what if they do nothing? We believe that what we are doing is right but they say it is none of our business. What do you think, Auntie?

Cynthia

TALKING POINTS

- Do you think Cynthia and her friends are right to be upset and angry with the situation at their school? Why or why not?
- What do you think of their plan to hold a meeting? Do you think they will succeed? Why or why not?
- What is a petition? How could it help Loveness?
- What happens in your area when a schoolgirl falls pregnant? Can she continue her studies? And what about the father of the baby, whether a teacher or a student? Are there any laws in your country about how to deal with this situation?



Dear Auntie Stella

I got married two years ago when I was 19 and my husband was 22. We were madly in love and now we have a beautiful baby. I never had sex with anyone else in my life, only my husband, Thulani. But six months ago he started coming home late. He said he was working but I was sure he was seeing someone else. I am really scared of AIDS so I finally got the courage to ask him to use a condom. Well, he went completely crazy and accused me of not trusting him.

Then I found out he had been visiting a woman just two streets away and at last Thulani admitted he had a girlfriend. He said he would break up with her because he only really loves me. But when I said I wouldn't have sex with him until he went for HIV testing, he refused. He says he absolutely doesn't want to know.

This has been going on for nearly a month now. I mostly make him sleep in the kitchen. He says no-one treats a husband like this. But what else can I do, Auntie? I still love him but I am terrified of getting HIV from him. Please help – perhaps I shouldn't have married so young!

Josephine

TALKING POINTS

- Josephine got married when she was only 19. Do people often marry at this age or younger in your communities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of marrying young?
- Why do men and women look for sex outside their marriages? Make a list of reasons and think of solutions for each one.
- Married women have the highest rate of HIV infection in southern Africa. Why do you think this is? What can society do about this?
- What do you think Josephine should do now? What should Thulani do?



Akulahlwa mbeleko ngokufelwa.

Do not give up. Better things are to come.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am 15 years old and have a problem which is making me very miserable. I sometimes get so depressed and yet there is no reason for me to feel this way. It looks like all my friends are having a good time and I force myself to join in and pretend that I am enjoying myself. This is difficult, but I know that if I do not pretend, I will lose my friends. What is wrong with me? Please help me.

Sipiwe



TALKING POINTS

- Do a lot of teenagers feel like Sipiwe? If so, why? Draw a ladder. Put the most common reason why young people feel unhappy in the top step of the ladder. Then put other reasons in order going down the ladder. What did you learn from this exercise?
- Health workers say that teenagers can feel depressed (sad and hopeless) for no reason because of chemical changes in your body when you're growing up. Girls, especially, can feel sad or irritable before their periods. Compare your experiences and see if this is true for you. Does it help if you know these feelings are normal?
- 'A problem shared is a problem halved'. This proverb means you should always talk about your problems. Do you agree with this advice – for Sipiwe and in general?
- What advice would you give Sipiwe to cope with her feelings?

Dear Auntie Stella

I'm 16 years old, still at school and pregnant! I want to kill myself. I only had sex with my boyfriend a few times and yet it still happened. I told my boyfriend but he just says how does he know it's his. He won't even talk to me. If I tell my parents they'll kick me out. My mother works hard to pay my school fees. She'll be so angry that I have done this.

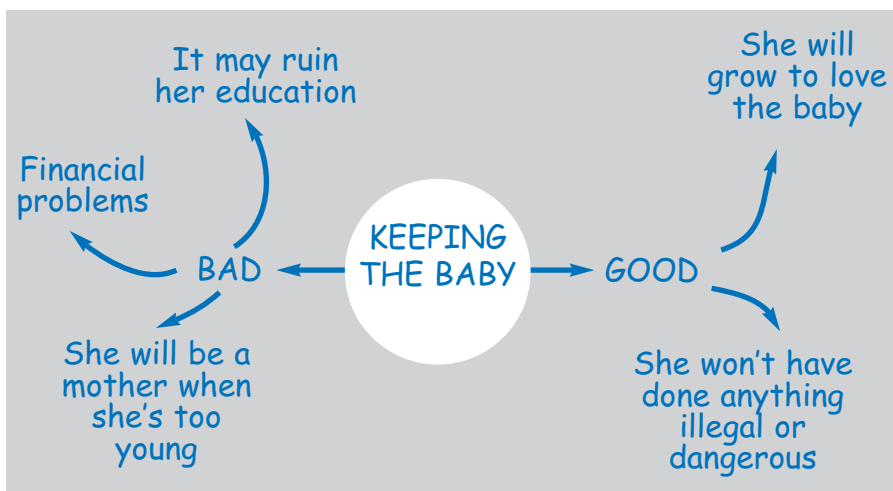
I really don't want this baby and I don't want to end my studies. I'm desperate but I can't tell anybody. The only solution I can think of is to find someone who can get rid of the pregnancy, but I'm scared and I don't have any money to pay. Please help me decide what to do.

Priscilla



TALKING POINTS

- Make a list of the different choices available to Priscilla now that she is pregnant. Then make a diagram like in the example below to show the possible consequences – good and bad – of each one. Discuss your ideas. What would you choose to do if you were Priscilla?



- Priscilla is thinking about getting rid of the baby. What are the dangers of illegal abortions?
- Why do you think Priscilla's boyfriend stopped talking to her? How do you think he feels? What can the boy – and his family – do in a situation like this?
- How can Priscilla find a way to tell her parents about the pregnancy so they will accept and help her?

Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a young guy of 18 years and I really love my girlfriend. We've been going out now for 10 months. We haven't slept together yet but we touch and kiss a lot. I know we're going to have sex soon – we both want to.

But I have a problem. I am a religious person and my pastor says that condoms are wrong and nobody must use them, even in marriage. He says I shouldn't have sex before I get married. I don't agree with him because we're definitely going to marry later. Before I found the Lord I already slept with a few girls. I know that was wrong but now I'm in love for real and I want to show it.

Then there's another thing. Some people at my church say condoms have tiny invisible holes that let HIV through, so they don't protect you at all. Is this true?

Auntie Stella, please help me. What can I do?

Munyaradzi

TALKING POINTS

- What does your religion teach about sex and relationships? Make a list. Do you agree with everything? What do you disagree with and why?
- Munyaradzi is worried about whether condoms really prevent HIV – what would you tell him?
- What could happen to Munyaradzi and his girlfriend if they have sex and don't use condoms?
- What advice would you give to Munyaradzi and his girlfriend?



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm 16 years old and I have a terrible problem. I can only fall in love with other girls. I don't like boys at all. When I was in Form One I had a boyfriend so that I would be like the other girls but I didn't even want him to kiss me, so we broke up.

I'm afraid and ashamed to tell anyone. My parents would beat me and chase me away. I can't talk to anyone at church because the pastor says that men who like men, and women who like women (we are called gays but I feel so sad!) are Satanic and evil. My friends wouldn't understand – they already laugh at me because I don't wear dresses or have a boyfriend.

What is wrong with me? I don't want to be different from everyone else. I hate feeling so alone. Sometimes I think about going to a phone box and calling any number, just so I can talk to someone about how I feel. All I think about is finding someone to love, but I've never even met another girl like me. Please help me. I'm so lonely and unhappy.

Alice

TALKING POINTS

- Do you think there are young people in your community like Alice, who like people of the same sex ?
- Do they have to hide their feelings? Why? If you're gay or have a gay friend and would like to talk about it, tell the group about your or your friend's experiences.
- Alice is afraid that everyone will reject her if they find out she's gay. Is this true? How do you think your family and friends would react if you told them you were gay?
- What advice would you give Alice? Should she tell anyone? What else can she do?

QUIZ: Gay people

Which statements are **facts** and which are **opinions**?

- 1 It is wrong to have sex with someone of the same sex.
- 2 There are gay people in every society all over the world.
- 3 The constitutions of some countries in southern Africa support the rights of gay people.
- 4 Gay people will harm our children.

- Why is it important to know the difference between facts and opinions?

Dear Auntie Stella

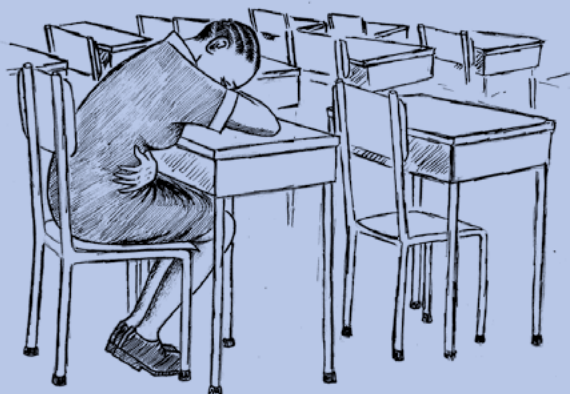
I am a girl of 16 and plan to write my O levels this year.

My problem is that every month I miss 4 days of school. Nearly a whole week! This is because I am too shy to go to school when I have my period. I use cotton wool in my panty. There's nowhere to put the used cotton wool and, besides, it doesn't always work. Last year, I spoilt my school uniform while sitting at my desk and I felt so embarrassed. Everyone could see the blood on my dress when I stood up and some of the students in my class laughed at me. I don't want this to happen again, ever.

Even if I do go to school, I can't concentrate because of the pain in my stomach. Sometimes I feel dizzy and feel like vomiting.

So, please help me, auntie, as I am worrying that I miss a lot of school and will do badly in my exams.

Agnes



TALKING POINTS

- Why do you think Agnes is embarrassed if people know she's got her period? Do most girls feel this way? How do you and your friends (boys and girls) think of periods:
 - As dirty and shameful?
 - As a good and natural part of being a woman?
 - Something else?

Are these attitudes helpful or harmful to your lives? If they are harmful, how can you change them?

- Agnes uses cotton wool when she has her period, but there are many other and better types of sanitary wear that girls and women can use to keep comfortable and clean. Discuss what choices you know about (you can separate into a girls and boys group if you want). What are the advantages and disadvantages of each choice?
- What needs to happen in Agnes' school to make it a clean and easy place for girls when they have their periods?
- What can Agnes do about her painful periods? List all the remedies you know that may help her.

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a girl of 16 years. I dropped out of school because I want to be a model. My boyfriend is a businessman and also owns a big farm. I met him three months ago when I was at his store and he proposed love to me. My friends told me to agree because he had the three Cs: cash, car and cellphone. They said sugar daddies give you clothes and proper food like chicken.

At first he gave me presents and said he would help me become a model. He even gave my brother a job on his farm. We went in his car and even stayed at hotels. But now he only wants to have sex and go. He shouts if I ask for anything, and calls me a prostitute.

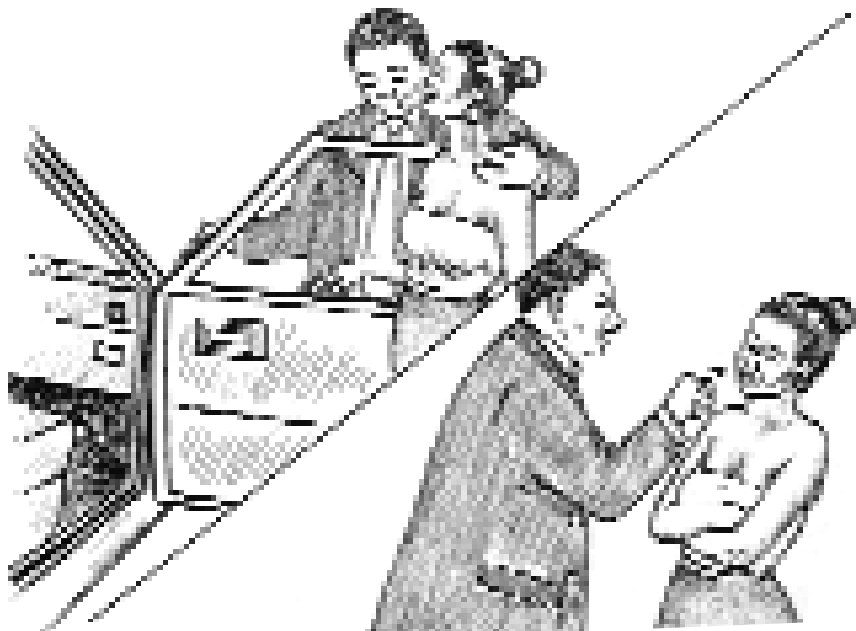
Last week I asked him to use a condom because it was safer but he got angry and hurt me when we had sex. He says if I want presents I must give him sex without wrappers. He promised to get herbs for me if I need them. But I am still afraid. He has not said any more about me being a model.

Auntie, what can I do? I boasted to my friends to make them jealous and they will laugh at me if I ask for advice.

Nyarai

TALKING POINTS

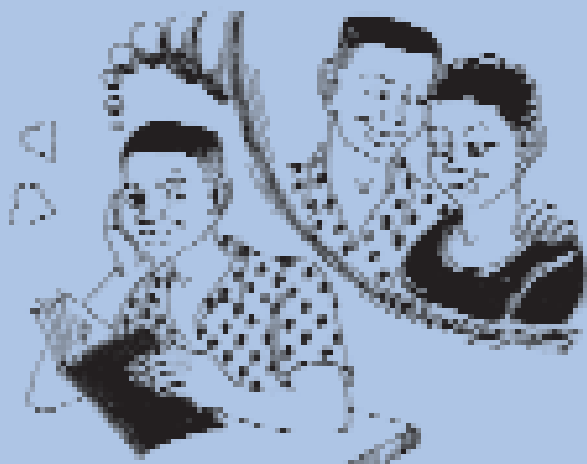
- In pairs, draw a picture of a sugar daddy and his girlfriend. If you like, add labels to give more details. Explain your pictures to the whole group.
- Why do older men like to have young girlfriends like Nyarai?
- Why do some teenage girls like to have sugar daddies? Are some reasons good and others bad?
- What advice would you give to Nyarai?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a 17-year-old boy and I have a girlfriend at my school who I love very much. I am doing my O levels and I really want to do well. But now I love my girlfriend so much that I am becoming dull in class. I find everything boring, even books, as she comes into my mind all the time. At one time I decided I should drop her and get on with my work but I couldn't – after all, she hasn't done anything wrong to me. So what is the best thing to do? Please help me, Auntie. I am worried that I will fail my exams.

Farayi



TALKING POINTS

- Do you think Farayi's problem is a common one for teenagers at school?
- Have you ever found that love made you lose interest in everything else?
 - a How long did it last?
 - b Did you find a way to control this?
 - c What happened in the end?
- What advice can you give to Farayi? Should he drop his girlfriend? What can he do if he wants to keep her but not fail his exams?
- Read this poem by Laura and Monica. Have you ever felt like this?

LOVE AND LEARNING

My hand is stuck - I can't write a thing, except
Your name - the only thing that makes sense.
My head says, 'Learn!'
My heart says 'Paul...'
What used to matter has gone
Behind the smokescreen of my burning love!
Clouding the essence of my life - my education

But, hey!
Love won't pave the way
To a prosperous career
Or keep the wolf at bay
I MUST wake up from this reverie...

Laura Moyo and Monica Masukusa

Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a man aged 22. My mother is HIV positive and talks about it openly. '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 15 years. She looks after herself by taking her ARV tablets every day, by eating good food and staying calm. 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. We also agree that parents should test all their kids, whether they are sick or not.

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?
- Do you agree with Taurai that parents need to tell their children the truth about their HIV status? Why do you think he also says that it's important for parents to test their children?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am 15 and my problem is that I have pimples on my face, which become so painful when washing. This problem started when I was 14, but there has been no improvement since then.

I once asked my aunt about it and she told me it was a sign of maturity. She did not know how to cure it. Since then, although I have asked many other people, no-one can help. I even asked the nurse at the clinic who told me to wash my face with a mild soap and I always do that. To my surprise the pimples have got even worse making my face very ugly. I sometimes feel so ugly that I don't go out with my friends.

Please Auntie help me choose the right lotion to use before I visit a n'anga.

Joan

TALKING POINTS

- What do you think could be the cause of Joan's pimples?
- What might reduce these pimples or stop them from getting worse...
 - a Are certain foods good or bad for your skin?
 - b Are certain drinks good or bad for your skin?
 - c Are certain soaps or lotions good or bad for your skin?
 - d Do you have any other ideas?
- Who can help – a doctor, herbalist, *n'anga* or somebody else?



Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a woman of 21 years and I am six months pregnant. My husband was ill for some time and passed away recently. He loved me very much, even though I am disabled (my leg was amputated after I was in a car accident a few years ago.)

When I registered at the maternity clinic the nurse told me about an HIV testing programme and I agreed to be tested. I got the result the same day and the nurse said I was HIV positive, even though I have not been sick. I was really upset but especially because of the baby. I don't want to give her HIV.

The nurse immediately put me on ARVs and told me that I will have to take these pills all the time now, and especially while I'm pregnant and breastfeeding. They also said they would give my baby some medicines to help her stay healthy. She said something about breastfeeding my baby, but I was crying and I didn't really understand.

So, Auntie, what can I do to help my baby? The doctors say I am strong enough to have this baby even though I'm disabled, but now I have this worry. Will my baby be born already sick? And since I have HIV, is it safe to breastfeed my baby?

Chipo

TALKING POINTS

- Is Chipo right to be worried about her baby? What happens when a mother is HIV positive or has AIDS? What do you know about how to prevent the baby from being infected?
- What are the advantages and risks of breastfeeding when you are HIV positive? What would you advise Chipo to do?
- What does your culture say about women who choose not to breastfeed? What can people do to change negative attitudes to women who make this choice?
- It's good to hear that Chipo had a loving relationship with her husband. Do you think it's hard for able-bodied people to accept and fall in love with people who are disabled? Why is this? What can be done in your community to change those prejudices?



Dear Auntie Stella

I am a boy of 15 and I have always admired my brother who is 22. He's really cool so everyone likes him and he always seems to know what's right. He's trained as a peer educator, too, so I trust him.

But yesterday he really shocked me! He was walking funny and when I asked why he told me he'd gone to the hospital last week to be circumcised. He said the nurse cut the foreskin off his penis.

I can't believe he did that! I don't know anyone else who's been circumcised, although I read somewhere that young boys are circumcised in some cultures. My brother says it's healthier and he will be less likely to get HIV or an STI. He even said that when he has a son, he'll have him circumcised when he's a baby.

What is my brother talking about?! He wants me to be circumcised as well! I'm much too scared to even think about it.

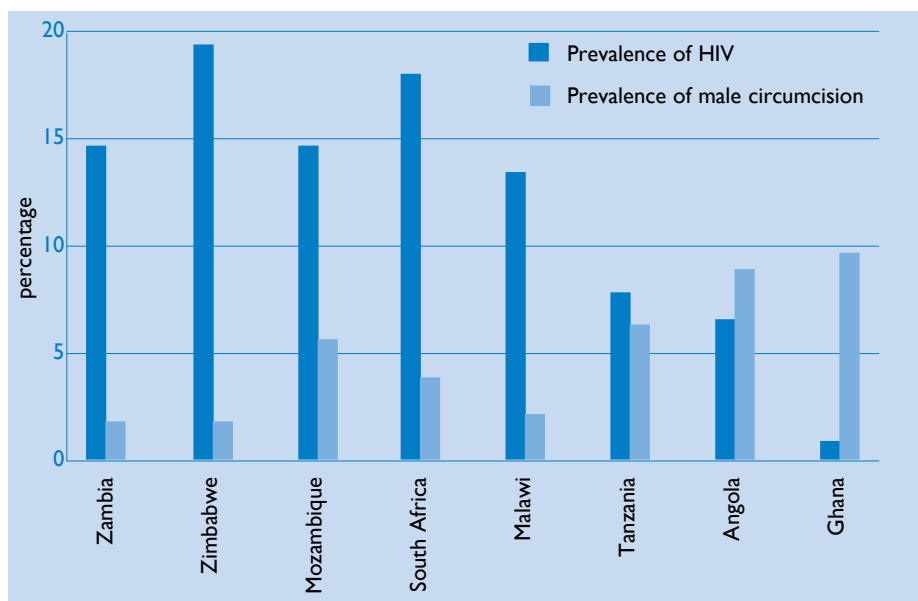
What if the nurse makes a mistake and cuts off my penis?! I am so worried.

Langton



TALKING POINTS

- Tell your group what you know about male circumcision. Why are some boys circumcised?
- Now look at the table below and talk about the questions that follow:



- What does this table suggest about the relationship between HIV and circumcision? Does this change your opinion about boys being circumcised?
- Choose any two countries from this table. What do you know about the practice of male circumcision in those countries?
- What advice would you give Langton?

Dear Auntie Stella

I am a young lady who completed A level last year. I am working part time at a local shop while I wait for my results. I have a steady boyfriend called Michael. He is my age and my family knows and really likes him. We started having sex about a year ago.

A few months ago the shop manager, Amon, began to take an interest in me. He's about 15 years older than me but very nice and often gives me money or presents from the shop. I have grown to like him and we are now having sex. He knows about my boyfriend but says he doesn't mind as long as I give him his fair share of attention and love.

Recently, I discovered that Amon is married which hurt me a lot. I tried to break up with him but, as he said, I'm also with

someone else. I know he will never marry me but I like him and can't resist the luxuries he gives me. My boyfriend could never afford such things.

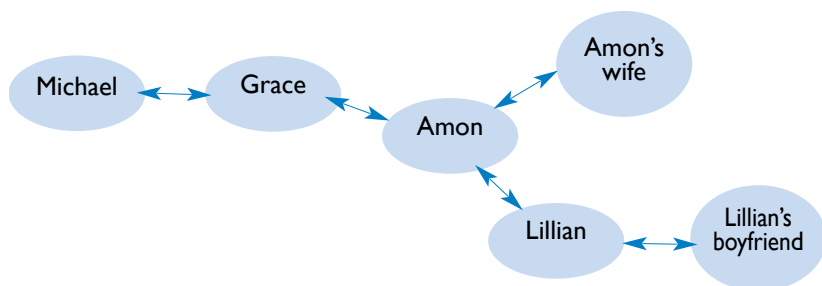
I am so confused, Auntie, what should I do?

Grace



TALKING POINTS

- What do you think about Grace's situation? Do young women and men in your community often find themselves in situations like this?
- List the reasons why young women may have more than one sexual relationship at the same time. Then list the reasons why young men do this. Are your two lists different? If so, what does this tell us?
- The diagram below shows the sexual relationships between Grace and her two partners. It also shows that, unknown to Grace, Amon has another girlfriend, Lillian.



- What other sexual relationships do you think the people in this network have? Copy the diagram onto a piece of paper and add the others who may be involved.
- Lillian's other boyfriend is HIV positive but he doesn't know. He doesn't like to use a condom. Which people in your diagram are now at risk of getting HIV? Why?
- What does the diagram show about the dangers of having more than one sexual partner at a time?
- What advice should Auntie Stella give Grace about her two relationships?

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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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 sadnesses, 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

● **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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

● **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. Swop 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

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.

There are now two safe and reliable ways to find out your HIV status. You can go to a clinic where a trained counsellor will talk to you, answer your questions and help you deal with your results, whatever they are. You will get your result the same day.

Another way is to use a self-help kit so you can test yourself at home. These kits are available in most pharmacies and district health facilities. The kit is not difficult to use – it has clear instructions and you will get your result in 20 minutes. Remember, especially if the test is positive, that you will still need to go to a clinic to get advice and support.

Also, if you tested negative but had unprotected sex in the last three months, you will need a second test a few months later. This is called the 'window period'.

Please encourage your boyfriend to have an HIV test. If he won't do this and won't wear a condom, think very carefully about having sex with him again. Stay healthy, Florence, and good luck.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Have you ever had sex without a condom? If you have, think about going to be tested. What support do you need to get the courage to do this? Help each other where you can.
- Do you know about U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable)? It is now accepted that if you take your ARVs exactly as you are told (important!), there will be so little of the HIV inside your body (it will be undetectable) that you'll be able to have sex without giving the virus to your partner! This is really good news. Find out more from a health worker or look at this YouTube video which will tell you more about self-help testing and this campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iEN8drbYVw>
- **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 go with her to the clinic or use a self-help kit at home. What happens in your roleplay? If the boyfriend doesn't agree, discuss how Florence can convince him better.
- See Card 19 for more information about ARVs and Card 26 on how to live positively.

Dear Shamiso

Well done for asking! Cervical cancer affects the opening to the womb, known as the cervix. It is the most common cancer among women in southern Africa and yet very few people know about it.

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

- She begins having sex before the age of 16 years
- She or her partner have had many sex partners
- She uses herbs on her vagina
- She is HIV+ or has had an STI, especially genital warts
- She's had more than four children with difficult births.

Cervical cancer can be prevented. Delay having sex until you are older and choose your partner wisely. Get vaccinated with the HPV Vaccine before you are sexually active. This will lower the chances of you getting cervical cancer. HPV Vaccines are available in many schools, hospitals and clinics. You can also go to a clinic to be screened for the virus – a VIAC screening – or get a pap smear. If you haven't had the vaccine, get tested every year if you are HIV+, and every 3 years if not. If treated early, cervical cancer can be completely cured.

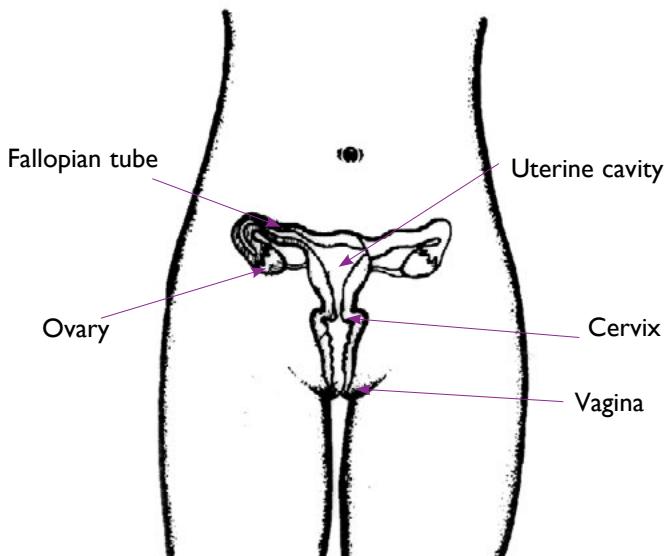
So, there is a lot you can do to keep you safe from cervical cancer. Act responsibly! Tell other women about what you've learnt so they can be safe too.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- What have you learnt about cervical cancer? Talk to your female friends and relatives. Invite a health care practitioner to tell you more about cervical cancer, the HPV vaccine and how it can be diagnosed through VIAC screening or a Pap Smear.
- Go through the list in Auntie Stella's letter. Are you, your partner or anyone else you know at risk of getting cervical cancer when you are older? If yes, discuss what you want to do about it.
- If you or any of your sisters are between the ages of 9 to 14 years, find out where you can go to get an HPV vaccine. Do it now before you become sexually active.

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

ACTION POINTS

- Why is there so much rape and violence against girls and women in our society? Have a discussion. For each answer you give, ask the question 'But why?' to try and find a deeper cause.
- Girls are telling stories about being raped at a party after their drinks have been 'spiked' with a sleeping pill. What do you know about spiking? What can you do to make sure all girls are safe from this harmful behaviour?

Rape and abuse in our 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 without being afraid. This includes women with disabilities (blind, deaf, physically disabled).
2. If a young person reports rape or abuse, adults take action to stop it from happening again. No-one blames the young person.
3. If a young person has been raped, clinics offer medical and counselling services and the police take legal action.
4. Boys believe and respect girls when they say 'no' to sex.

Results: Very few of you will be able to answer TRUE to all of the above questions. What needs 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

ACTION POINTS

- **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) can help people with HIV and prevent them developing AIDS, so the nurse was right in giving them to you after you tested HIV+. ARVs will not get rid of the HIV but it will help keep you healthy. It will stop the virus from multiplying in your body and protect you from many infections and cancers.

Remember to take the ARVs exactly as told – at the same time and never missing a dose. This is very important. If you don't, your body will build up a resistance to the drugs you are taking, your HIV levels will rise again and you may become sick. If this happens, you will have to get a different drug from the hospital (called second line regimen).

ARVs are available for free in health centres in Zimbabwe and in other countries in the region. These health centres also provide HIV testing and counselling, and advice on treatment and support when you are not feeling well or are pregnant.

So, Thandi, you don't have to worry. ARVs will help you stay well, especially if you eat healthy foods and get medical advice if you think you are getting an infection. If you continue to use ARVs responsibly, you can look forward to many more healthy years with your daughter!

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.
- 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.)
- People with HIV need to make sure they don't give the virus to others, such as sexual partners, unborn babies, new borns, patients needing blood transfusions. Discuss how the risk of spreading HIV be reduced? Which of these strategies can be solved by health centres and family planning clinics? Which are about choices and changes in the way you live?
- Find out more about the U=U Campaign (see Card 14). Make sure you understand what 'undetectable = untransmittable' means for someone who is 1. HIV+, 2. on ARVs and 3. with an HIV viral load that is so small that it can't be seen on an HIV test. Why do you think it's still necessary to use a condom? (think about pregnancy, STIs, etc).
- See Card 26 for information on how to live a healthy and positive life when you are HIV+. Also look at Card 40 on pregnancy, HIV and ARVs.

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

ACTION POINTS

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

ACTION POINTS

- 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. You will also need to find out about his HIV status. If he is HIV negative, talk to him about going to the clinic together to find out about a drug called PrEP that helps prevent transmission of the HIV virus. If he refuses to use condoms – male or female -, and 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 both take your ARVs regularly and on time, and still use a condom to prevent transmission of STIs or unwanted pregnancy.

Best wishes for a happy future, whatever you decide.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Do you agree with Auntie Stella? Why or why not?
- Find out more about PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) and whether it is available at the clinic nearest to you.
- **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? 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?



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 is not a death sentence, especially now that ARVs are freely available. And, in addition to taking ARVs, there are other ways to prevent yourself from getting sick. Firstly, you need to look after yourself – eat natural and unprocessed food (it isn't expensive!), get enough sleep and exercise, avoid things like sugar and alcohol, go to the clinic if you are unwell 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. But the truth is that, these days, an HIV positive person can live a long and happy life and have HIV negative babies just as long as you take your ARVs regularly. Many people have had HIV for years and some young people in their 20s were born with HIV and are healthy and successful. Many have sexual relationships and some choose to have children. You can do this 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 swop 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.

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 rights 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.

Before you start organising a petition, find out what the law says about teachers who abuse students and what happens to school girls who fall pregnant. Many countries in southern Africa have policies on how to deal with teachers who have abused students. And most constitutions now say that every child, male or female, has a right to education. Some governments now guarantee that girls of school-going age can go back to school after they have had a baby. So, the law may be on Loveness' side!

Try to get as many people as possible to sign your petition – students, teachers, parents, youth and women's organisations, as well as people who are respected and have influence (like community leaders, political leaders and business people). Write a letter to the newspaper. The more people who are behind you, the more likely the School Board will listen.

I hope the school supports you and the teacher loses his teaching certificate. I also hope Loveness manages to get back to school and that her family help her look after her baby until she is older. Good luck.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Have any of you, or do you know someone, who tried to do something to right a wrong? Tell your group what happened and what you learnt from this experience.
- 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:

| Problem | Solution we want | Strategy | Resources | Who's responsible? | By when |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| What is the problem? | What change do we want? | What must we do to achieve change? For example: hold meetings, talk to people who can help, organise a petition | What do we need? (like money, people to do the work or materials) | Who in our group is responsible for doing what? For example: Fadzai- organise meeting Jeff - write article for the newspaper Tina -talk to people about the petition | Date by when we agree to carry out the tasks |

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

ACTION POINTS

- **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 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 and also pretending – tell them about your problem and they may feel freer to talk too.

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

There are practical things you can do to help deal with these feelings. It may help to talk to your family and friends. Regular exercise helps too. Get enough sleep and eat healthy food. Try to relax and do things you enjoy like singing or reading or playing sport. 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, Sipiwe. You're brave to ask for help and I'm sure you can deal bravely with this depression too.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Tell your group about a time when you felt sad, confused or irritable. What or who made you feel better?
- Draw a picture of yourself. Then, around your picture, draw at least three things that you want to do to stay happy. For example, you could decide to exercise more often. Helping others is another way to make you feel good (like cooking a meal for your family, or walking younger children to school). Make a plan to do these activities. Afterwards, discuss what happened.
- Sometimes young people or adults feel so desperate and alone that they have suicidal thoughts (they think about killing themselves) or they try to hurt themselves (called self harm). Often they don't tell anyone so you may not even know. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine what this must feel like and what kind of help you would need if you were in this situation. Discuss how you could help someone who you think may be having suicidal thoughts.



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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

ACTION POINTS

- **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

As long as young people think periods are dirty and shameful, then it will remain difficult for girls to feel comfortable at school at that time of the month. We need a safe environment for girls who are menstruating, with places where they can find sanitary wear (if possible, for free!) and for disposing used pads, and teachers who can tell boys and girls about the normal changes in their bodies so they are comfortable and understanding of others.

Also, there are better sanitary wear than using cotton wool. You will find disposable sanitary pads and tampons in the shops, but they are expensive and you can use them only once. Try to find reusable pads or menstrual cups - both are becoming more available in both rural and urban areas. These can be washed and used again. Ask your teacher, a nurse or a trusted woman for advice where to get these. All these alternatives will keep you safe from spoiling your clothes.

There are also many things you can do to help with your period pains. Rub your lower belly or put something warm there. Exercise. And, if you need to, take a mild painkiller such as aspirin or paracetamol.

I hope this advice helps you feel better about staying at school when you are menstruating, Agnes. Good luck!

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Discuss Auntie Stella's ideas about what schools need to do to make it easier for girls when they are menstruating. What would you like to see happening in your school? What can you do together to get the school to do these things?
- **GIRLS:** What sanitary wear is available in your community? Where can you go to find the sanitary wear you want and what do you need to do to make sure you have access to them every month?
- **BOYS:** What questions or worries do you have about girls' periods? Where can you go to find out more?
- Do you think teachers, parents and other adults are raising enough awareness about girls' periods and other physical changes in young people's lives? If not, talk to a sympathetic adult about ways to improve education about these changes.
- See Card 21 for more information about menstruation and good health.

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

Society can be very unfair against people who are different, like those who are HIV positive. So, I can't give you an answer about who to tell when you have HIV or AIDS. 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. It's often important for family members as well.

Certainly I agree that children are usually happier when they know the truth, even if it is sad. It's good that your mom told you. And you are both right that it's very important if one or both of the parents, or any children in the family, are HIV positive that the other children are also tested. Even if they are not sick, they still may be HIV positive and will need to go on ARVs.

You are quite right to be proud of your mother. Be well and good luck!

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- 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 who is being discriminated against (think about mental illness, or albinism, or someone who is poor, etc). Most people are nasty about the person, but one person argues strongly to try to change the way the rest of the group thinks. What happens in the end?
- Invite someone like Taurai and his mother to come and talk to you about living in a family where one or more of them are HIV positive and taking ARVs. How does their status affect the way they live together? What decisions do they need to make as a family?



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

ACTION POINTS

- 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

I'm sorry to hear about your car accident and your husband's death. But, don't worry about your baby. Most babies born to HIV positive mothers will not get HIV as long as you take your ARVs and go to the clinic regularly while you are pregnant and when your baby is still young.

Health workers are advising pregnant women (HIV positive or not) to feed their babies on breastmilk only (nothing else, except medicines from the clinic) for the first six months. This helps the baby stay strong. At six months, the mother can start the baby on other foods – such as porridge or mashed bananas. If you can't breastfeed, then use baby formula but don't put extra water into the mixture.

After you have given birth, your baby may be tested to see whether she is HIV positive. Depending on how much HIV you have in your body, she may be put on ARVs and possibly other medicine to help her stay well. You must come back to the clinic after 6 weeks to have another test, again after 3 months, and also after you've stopped breast feeding.

This can be a confusing time, so ask lots of questions. Many clinics offer HIV counselling. They will help you make the right decisions for you and your baby's health.

Enjoy 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?
- Find out as much as you can about the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT) programme in your area. Ask a nurse from your clinic or a mother who has gone through the programme to come and talk to your group.
- See Card 19 for information about ARVs and Card 26 for more information on how to live positively.



Dear Langton

Your brother is absolutely right! He's done a good thing by going to the hospital to be circumcised. Research shows that circumcised men are much less likely to get HIV through unprotected sex with an infected partner. HIV sticks to the foreskin (the tissue covering the head of the penis) easily so being circumcised helps keep your penis free from infection.

Many countries in east and southern Africa are developing programmes to encourage male circumcision. They are especially encouraging parents to circumcise their sons when they are still young.

If you take your brother's excellent advice, make sure you are circumcised by a trained health worker in a safe, clean environment like a hospital, even if it is part of a cultural ceremony. Health workers will explain it all and give you medicine to stop the pain.

Remember:

- **No sex for at least six weeks** to allow your cut to heal completely.
- **Always use a condom and keep to one faithful partner.** Circumcision lessens your risks of infection but doesn't give total protection.

So, talk to your brother again and listen to his advice.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Now that you've read Auntie Stella's answer, do you think it's a good idea for boys and young men to be circumcised? Tell your group what you think and why.
- Organise a debate on this topic:
'All teenage boys should be circumcised to prevent the spread of HIV.'
- What actions do you want to take to encourage your friends and your community to support male circumcision? (Remember: women can also play a role in encouraging circumcision.) Work together and draw up a plan.
- Visit your local health facility to find out more about male circumcision and to find out when and how they do male circumcision. Before you go, make a list of questions to ask.
- You can also invite someone to give a talk at your school, youth group or other place where young people meet.

Dear Grace

You're right to be worried about your situation. Having sex with more than one person at the same time greatly increases the risk of HIV. Also, older men are more likely to be HIV positive. Amon may even have other girlfriends who have other boyfriends and any of them could already be HIV positive.

Having more than one sexual partner is especially dangerous because of what we call 'the acute infection period'. Newly infected people have a high concentration of HIV in their blood, making them extra infectious during the first three months.

If you haven't used a condom every time you've had sex, please get yourself tested and try to persuade Amon and Michael to get tested too.

You are young and have a bright future ahead of you so think carefully about what you want in your life. As you see no future with Amon, should you continue putting yourself and Michael at risk for the sake of a few luxuries?

I am sure you will make the right decision and I wish you all the best.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- What do you think of Auntie Stella's answer? Did you learn anything new about the dangers of having many sexual relationships?
- Discuss the following situation:
- Over the last year:
 - Maxwell had three sexual partners at the same time.
 - Brighton had three sexual partners, one at a time. His first relationship lasted eight months, the second lasted three months and he's still involved with the third person.
- Who is in more danger of getting the HIV virus? Why?
- **ROLEPLAY:** Work in pairs. Roleplay a discussion between Maxwell and a friend. The friend is telling Maxwell about the dangers of having more than one sexual relationship. Maxwell is worried and decides that he wants to stop having so many sexual partners. His friend helps him work out what to do.

If you have time, change roles.
- Your local youth group wants to protect young people from HIV and AIDS. They know that young people make the right decisions if they have the right information. They are calling for ideas for their poster campaign.

Work in groups to decide on three key messages to include on the posters and then design powerful posters for each message.

Vote on the best posters and then put them up around your community.