



COACH MPIOLO

MEN'S FEARS

When it comes to HIV, men experience genuine fear

Fear of death

HIV is still associated with the image of frail, emaciated dying people. Some might have experienced HIV related death directly.

Fear of disclosure

Men are aware of the HIV stigma and fear the consequence of the responses they may get e.g., the loss of respect and status they might enjoy as a husband, son, father or friend. They fear the relationship consequences of letting partners or employers know.

Fear of loss of identity

In a patriarchal society where masculinity matters, HIV is a sign of weakness. Men define themselves by their ability to be a *provider*. They, and the people around them, believe that HIV removes your ability to provide.

Fear of loss of lifestyle

Fear that their social life - whether it is sporting, drinking or 'partying' will come to an end.

Fear of loss of privacy

Fear of being exposed in his community as 'that guy with HIV' and having to present himself in clinics regularly where healthcare providers 'know' that he has HIV.

Fear of loss of control / independence

Fear that he is now dependent on medication to lead an ordinary life; that it is up to others to accept him that he is subject to the grace of others. He fears the negative, degrading/belittling/demeaning interactions at the clinic.

Fear of being alone

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What is the source of men's fear?

Men's fear is a result of stigma and poor knowledge of HIV.

Stigma is defined by social beliefs - the way other people see you or judge you is beyond your control and unfortunately too many people still misunderstand what it means to have HIV.

People associate HIV with illness, death, shame and embarrassment - once you have it you are finished.

This could not be further from the truth - HIV is a chronic disease like diabetes or High Blood Pressure, that can be successfully treated and controlled allowing you to live a perfectly normal life. By adhering to treatment, you cannot infect others.

