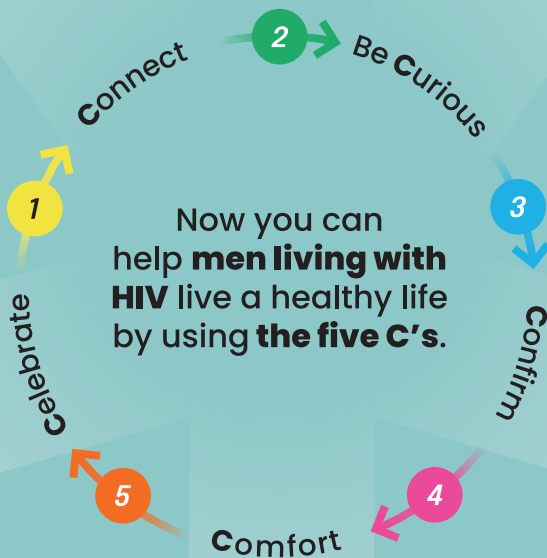
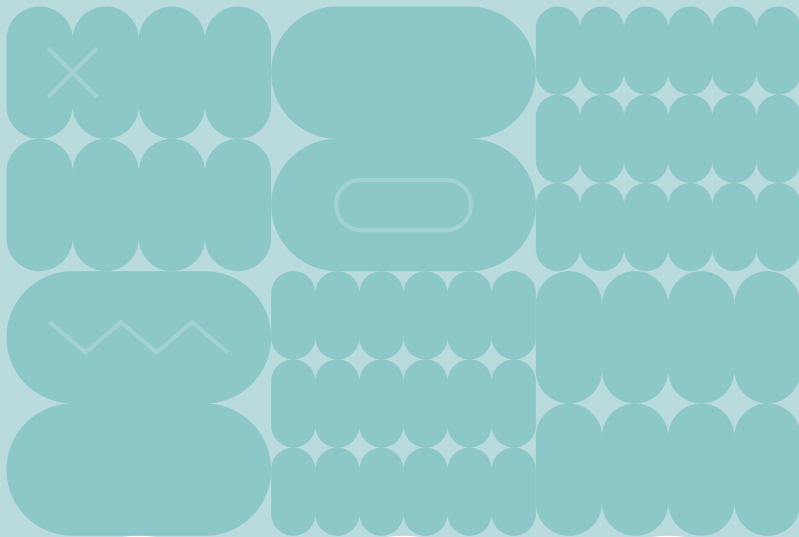


**Men
& HIV**

**A Job Aid For
Healthcare Providers**





**THE MPILO
PROJECT**



www.psi.org



matchboxology.com

This tool will help you:



Better understand the different types of men you meet every day



Better understand what makes it difficult for men to use HIV services



Better understand how men are thinking and feeling about HIV



Improve your conversations and the way you communicate with these men



Maintain fresh new approaches for working with men

About men and fear

Men may appear fearless and apathetic, but research with more than 2000 men found that **HIV makes many of them feel anxious and afraid**. This has big implications for the way healthcare providers interact with men.

Men's need to appear tough can come across as an attitude of non-compliance, arrogance and stubbornness to which a healthcare provider could react negatively and further contribute to a negative expectation of men.

Because men are actually feeling scared and vulnerable, high-pressure approaches and harsh attitudes among healthcare providers will only make them feel worse and in turn behave worse.

Men need encouragement and reassurance that everything will be OK even if they are living with HIV.

➔ **Start by understanding a man's fears.**

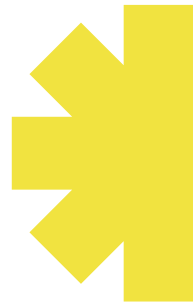
So, what are men scared of and what can we do to help?



Men avoid anything to do with HIV because of the fears described in the following pages.

For men these fears are real.

When they hear an HIV diagnosis many men will experience shock. It is a real trauma and often the easiest way to deal with it is to deny it, to simply block it out of their lives.



Men fear losing their **health and strength**



They think: "I'm going to get sick and die."



Feels like the dread of death, that eventually HIV is going to get them.

What you can do

Help them change their view of what having HIV means. Make sure they understand that with HIV treatment, they can be perfectly healthy and live just as long as someone without HIV.



"HIV is no longer about getting ill as long as you keep taking your medication. The medication can quickly get HIV completely under control."



They fear the loss of **virility and sexual pleasure**



They think: "I'll lose my power, and no one will want to have sex with me."



Feels like weak, inadequate, like a loser.

What you can do

Support men in sharing their HIV status with their partner. Help them understand that most relationships survive an HIV diagnosis and in fact many come out stronger and more supportive. Explain that once they reach viral suppression, they cannot infect their partner.



"If you know you have HIV then you can avoid passing it to others very easily. When you first start treatment, you should wear a condom. But the good news is that within a few months of taking treatment, you should get to viral suppression. That means there is so little HIV in your body that **YOU CAN'T PASS IT ON**, even without a condom."



Men fear losing their **friends and family**



They think: “Everyone close to me is going to reject me.”



Feels like alone and isolated.

What you can do

Help men understand that sharing their HIV status can take a weight off their shoulders and reassure them that in most cases families continue to love and support unconditionally.

“Telling someone that you are living with HIV can be scary, but it’s a lot easier if you know the facts about treatment and can explain them clearly. Often your loved ones are also just scared and need to know that everything will be alright. You might even find that it brings you closer to each other.”



“You can’t control how people are going to react, but often when you accept yourself and show people that you’re ok, they also take it as a signal that it’s going to be ok.”



They fear the loss of **status and respect** in the community



They think: "I'm going to be shunned, gossiped about."



Feels like public shame and humiliation.

What you can do

Help men understand that staying healthy is more important than what other people think. And being open and confident about living with HIV can actually help them gain respect.



"The truth is that HIV is no big deal. It doesn't have to change how you see yourself or how other people see you. Some people might be judgmental because they don't know the facts, but showing them that HIV hasn't changed anything about you will make it hard for them to judge you or think differently about you."



Men fear losing their **lifestyle and enjoyment**



They think:

"Everything that I enjoy in life is going to change."



Feels like life with HIV is going to be dull and boring.

What you can do

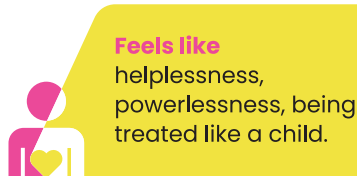
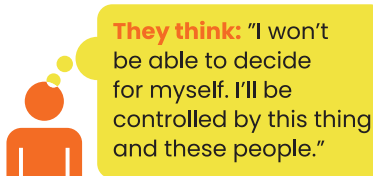
Help men understand that living with HIV doesn't have to change any of the things they enjoy. They can still go out and have fun. They can still drink alcohol. They can still eat whatever foods that they enjoy. They can still see a traditional healer or take traditional medicine alongside their HIV treatment.



"As long as you start and stay on treatment, you won't need to give up anything that you don't want to. Treatment keeps you healthy and lets you enjoy your life."

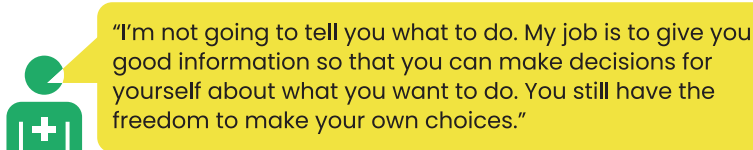


They fear **losing control over their lives and decisions**



What you can do

Help men feel like they are still in control of their own life decisions. Rather than telling them what to do, help them reach the point where they choose to be on treatment because they understand the benefits and have their own motivation.



They fear the **loss of time and money**



They think: "I might lose my job, and no one else will employ me. And then there's the cost of getting to the clinic and the hours I'm waiting when I could be working or looking for work."



Feels like
financial
stress,
pressure,
anxiety.

What you can do

Help men understand that while it can be hard to go to the clinic, they only have to do it until they reach viral suppression and are eligible for decanting to Dablap Meds. You might also talk about any special arrangements like fast-tracking, extended hours, and community-based services if available.



"Now that you have HIV, your two choices are to manage it or let it manage you. If you don't take your treatment, getting sick will end up costing you a lot more time and money than doing what you need to do to stay healthy."

"In the beginning you'll need to go to the clinic, but if you can just make it through the first six months you'll only have to go once a year after that, and you can pick up your meds in a more convenient place like a pharmacy or community centre."

Men **anticipate loss even before testing**



They think: "I know what I get up to. I probably have it. And if I have it, it's only going to mean bad things. Maybe it's better not to know."



Feels like denial, avoidance, paralysis.

What you can do

We can't wait until men test to help them understand that they can live a happy, healthy life with HIV. We need them to know even before testing that they're going to be ok, whatever the outcome.



"You might feel like it's just better not to know, or to put it off to another time, but the truth is that once you know, you can stop worrying and do something about it. Whether the test is negative or positive, we can help you stay perfectly healthy."



Different men, different fears



It's important to remember that not all men are the same.

They experience these fears differently, depending on their personality, lifestyle, work situation, family situation, etc.

We have to tailor our messages and support to suit different men.

Here are some examples of how different men can be and how it affects their attitude towards HIV.
What will you say to help these men?





The good guy

The **good guy** is always friendly and willing to lend a hand. Everyone calls him when they need help.



He feels pretty good about life. He might not have much, but he has his friends, and he feels connected to his community.

His self-image and reputation are important to him. He cares a lot about being known as a good person.

His main fear about HIV is that it would turn him from 'the good guy' into 'the bad guy'. If people know he has HIV, they might think of him as risky, irresponsible, etc.

He is very sensitive to feeling judged and may need reassurance that having HIV does not change who he is or make him a bad person. He might also respond to the message that being on treatment is the responsible thing to do.



The fun guy

The **fun guy** is 'living his best life'. He is all about fun and good vibes.



Like the good guy, he feels pretty good about life and where he's headed. He's quite social, likes to go out with friends. He may also have one or two casual partners in addition to his main one.

His main fear about HIV is that it's 'the end of the party'. It will mean giving up all the things he enjoys in life – stop having sex, stop drinking, stop eating junk food, etc. He doesn't care about a 'long and healthy life' so much as a happy, enjoyable life.

He needs counselling that focuses on being able to live the life he wants, rather than what he must give up.

He is also sensitive to feeling judged about his lifestyle, so when we talk to him, we need to be sure that we are coming from a place of empathy and support, rather than trying to change him.



The going nowhere guy

The **going nowhere guy** might look like he's ok – maybe he even finished matric and got a decent job. He might have a wife and kids.

But while his life might be stable, he feels like his best days are in the past and he doesn't have much to look forward to. He doesn't have many sources of motivation in his life and may not have any close connections to family and friends.

His main fear about HIV is that it will be another burden to carry in a life that already has a lot of burdens.

He needs to know that living with HIV is now easy: one pill a day and he's sorted. He also needs an easy way to collect his meds – the promise of being able to switch to decentralised collection (Dablap) once he's stable on treatment is likely to be meaningful.





The traditional guy

The **traditional guy** embraces traditional values and respects the traditional ways.

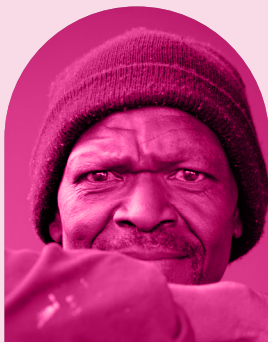
He might be living in a rural area, or perhaps he grew up in a rural area but has come to the city for work.

He enjoys the status that comes from being a traditional man – head of his family, respected by other men in his community. He may also embrace traditional ways of seeing men and women and seeing men as being self sufficient and being able to handle things without help from others.

His main fear about HIV is that it would cause him to lose status and respect within his family and community.

He may need support in sharing his HIV status with his family and community, particularly peer-to-peer support from another man. He may also be inclined to listen to authority figures in his community.





The hard luck guy

The **hard luck guy's** luck in life has not been good. Life is hard, and he doesn't really expect it to get better.

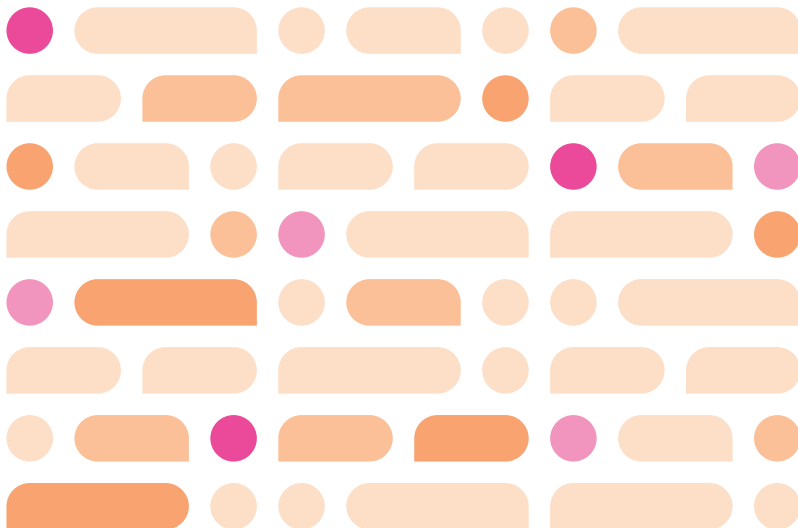
He might show signs of anger, anxiety or depression, as well as excessive drinking. He might not have anyone he can talk to, and he probably does not feel safe talking to a healthcare provider.

His main fear about HIV is that it will be one more failure in life, one more thing that drags him down. He would rather just not think about it or deal with it until he has to.

What he needs most is a friend, someone who can give him a safe space to talk through his problems and help him build the confidence that being on treatment is something he can manage and even feel successful in doing. He may be particularly receptive to peer-to-peer and support group approaches.



**Now you can provide an effective
health service to men by following
these 5 steps - the 5 C's**



1

Connect

The first step is to connect with him as a person. Don't go straight to HIV. Rather take just a few minutes to share a little about yourself. It can help create feelings of trust and openness. Look for anything you may have in common.



This load shedding is wearing me down,
how about you?



Did you catch the taxi here? The cost of transport
is killing us.



Thank you for being patient – I also hate it when
I have to wait.



2

Be Curious

Take just a few minutes to find out more about who he is, so that you have a better idea of who you are supporting. Find out as much as you can about who he is and what his life looks like.

You might ask:



Where do you stay?



What is your family situation?



What do you enjoy doing?



How are you feeling today?



What's on your mind at the moment?



3

Confirm

Your next task is to find out how he feels about HIV and particularly any fears or concerns he has. Not just thoughts but feelings. **You might ask:**

- ✱ What comes to mind when you think about HIV?
- ✱ How does thinking about HIV make you feel?
- ✱ Is there anything you're worried or concerned about?
- ✱ Is there anything that is feeling difficult?
- ✱ Is there anything that is confusing or unclear?
- ✱ Is there anything that would make this situation easier for you?



3

Confirm

continued

If helpful, you can get even more specific:

Do you have any concerns about...



...being able to stay strong and healthy with HIV?



...telling people in your life that you have HIV?



...how your partner might react to you having HIV?



...how HIV might affect your image or reputation?



...things you might have to give up because of HIV?



...being treated well at the clinic?



...being able to make your own decisions about your health?



...the time and cost of going to the clinic?



...passing HIV to someone else?

4

Comfort

Once you've identified a man's fears, start by acknowledging that those fears are completely normal. Then help him understand that some of those fears are bigger than they need to be and work through how to overcome them. If his fears are based on inaccurate information, help him understand the truth. If his fears are social and emotional, reassure him that you're there to support him and that things almost always work out better than we fear they will.



"Living with HIV is not at all like it used to be. For most people it's just one pill a day, no negative effects, and no worrying about getting sick or passing it on to anyone."



"You might feel like having HIV is the end of the world, but the truth is that once they have accepted it, most men quickly get back to living their regular lives just like before. Nothing about your life has to change other than just taking your one pill a day."



5

Celebrate

Many men have the old HIV story stuck in their minds. A man might be thinking that living with HIV will mean feeling bad about himself for the rest of his life. Help him understand that the new HIV story means that with treatment he can live a completely healthy, happy, normal life. He can feel good about being on treatment. **Talk about the benefits of treatment:**



Staying strong and healthy.



Feeling powerful.



Being in control of your life and health.



Having support from your partner, family and friends.



Finding a new source of status and respect.



Enjoying the same lifestyle and pleasures as before.



Being able to live the life you want for yourself.



Playing your part in getting to zero new cases of HIV.

