

Domain: Hygiene

Age group: 12-14 years

Subjects: HIV/AIDS transmission, impacts, prevention

1.7 HIV/AIDS - A disease you can avoid

Learning goals:

Knowledge:

- Children know the meaning of the terms HIV and AIDS.
- They can identify ways in which HIV can be transmitted.
- They can tell how transmission can be prevented.
- They can distinguish between correct and wrong cultural beliefs and practices.

Attitude:

- They realise that HIV/AIDS is widespread and a real risk.
- They realise that HIV/AIDS can be avoided.
- They come to appreciate that people may get infected because of their circumstances.

Practical skills:

- They can identify items that may transmit HIV if not used safely e.g. needles, razor blade.
- They can collect articles and/or illustrations to give information and discuss HIV/AIDS.

Psychosocial life skills:

- They can communicate effectively with others on the good and bad traditional beliefs and practices associated with HIV/AIDS.
- They can express their values in relation to these beliefs and practices.
- They are able to make responsible decisions on sexual behaviour under pressure.
- They can seek help in situations that they cannot handle on their own.
- They show empathy towards people with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Participatory methods:

- Poems
- Drawings
- Discussions using stick figures, question/problem box

Materials:

Old magazines and papers with articles and illustrations, and actual items that can be used to demonstrate transmission and blockage of transmission of HIV/AIDS, pamphlets, posters and booklets on HIV/AIDS, real stories.

Activities:

Poems

- Invite the children to make poems on subjects related to HIV/AIDS, e.g. people living with HIV/AIDS, children becoming orphans, students reacting to the death of a teacher. If necessary indicate a minimum and a maximum length.
- Ask each student to recite her/his poem.
- Invite the class to determine the main subject of each poem and one student to write the subjects on the blackboard.

- At the end, help the class to order the subjects into a classification, e.g.
 - the symptoms of HIV/AIDS;
 - the effects on a person's health;
 - the social hardships for these persons;
 - the consequences for their family;
 - the ways of transmission;
 - the reasons for transmission;
 - the steps for prevention of transmission, physically and socially;
 - misconceptions on prevention and cure and how to deal with them.
 - support to patients and their family - in care, work, hygiene, food, understanding...
- Help the students to identify all categories of transmission: sex-related, by having unprotected intercourse with someone with an HIV infection, blood-related when sharing infected needles, razors, etc., from infected mothers to their children during birth and breastfeeding.
- Facilitate a discussion on the list of subjects, including safe sex practices and how to negotiate these (abstinence, refusal, negotiating safe sex including condoms).

Drawing

- Invite the students to make drawings of situations related to HIV/AIDS - ways of transmission, situations that led to transmission, consequences for the persons and their family, etc.
- Invite the children to display their drawings and if necessary explain them.
- Facilitate an analysis and discussion of the subjects covered and subjects missing in the same way as under 'poems'.

Cut and paste

- Collect old magazines, newspapers, cards, etc. and also ask the children to bring them.
- Using tear or cut and paste, ask the students to make small posters depicting how HIV/AIDS can be transmitted, addressing transmissions related to blood, sex and motherhood.
- Ask the students to display their sheets on the walls or floor.
- Facilitate a peer review round in which they check each other's posters for completeness of the three transmission categories.
- Depending on what is culturally acceptable, let the students take their posters home for home discussion, share them with community groups for discussions, use them at parents' day, etc.

Stick figures exercise

- Draw simple figures, such as stick figures, of a typical family on pieces of paper or slates, one person per paper/slate. They may, for example, be a father, a mother, a grandmother/father, an adolescent son, an adolescent daughter, a younger son, a younger daughter and a baby.
- Mark one of the pictures on the back with a cross or a dot.
- To start the activity, place all figures with the front side up on the floor.
- Introduce the family and explain that one of its members has been infected with HIV/AIDS.
- Ask the children some introductory questions, e.g.
 - What happens to you when you are infected?
 - How can you become infected?
- Now ask the children to turn the pictures over to see who in this family has HIV/AIDS.
- Facilitate a discussion on what it means to have HIV/AIDS for this person, his/her family and his/her community and on some of the wrong ideas about how the disease can spread and be prevented/stopped.
- Facilitate a discussion with the students, e.g. on:
 - what they can do to help this family cope with the disease;
 - how the other family members can prevent becoming infected;
 - what advice and support they would give to their age mates in the family.

Risk identification exercise

This activity can be done in plenary or with small groups.

- Collect a number of sharp objects, e.g. a needle, a knife and a broken piece of glass.
- Invite the class to think of how each item could play a role in transmitting HIV/AIDS.
- When done with small groups, give each group an item.
- Encourage the children to come up with different examples, e.g. needles used by medical staff and by drug addicts.
- Encourage each group to come up with a story for their item:
 - How a young person became infected with that item
 - Why that happened
 - How another young person was able to avoid the risk
- Invite each group to tell their story in plenary.
- Help the class to draw conclusions on the risks and what young people can do to avoid these.
- Ask the class which transmission risks these items do not symbolise (sexual transmission in various situations, transmission from infected mothers to their babies at birth and when breast feeding). Which are the most common forms of transmission? How many people get infected through broken glass? (Hardly any.) How many through sexual intercourse? (Very many). Why would sharing needles be more dangerous than treading on glass? (Injecting fluids into body, many users, likelihood of needle already being infected).
- Discuss how to prevent sexual transmission - which sex practices are safe and unsafe, how to agree on abstinence, negotiate for safe sex, how to refuse when under pressure.

Application:

Role-play

- Divide the class into small groups or ask for one or two volunteer groups.
- Ask the groups to prepare a role-play for the next lesson about how using and giving in to pressure can lead to becoming infected with HIV/AIDS and what this then means for the lives of that person and his/her family.
- Invite the groups to perform their play.
- Facilitate a discussion about sexual pressures and power differences between peers, older and younger persons in the school, the family and the community (e.g., 'lover boys', 'sugar daddies' authority figures including teachers), and ways to cope with various situations of sexual pressure. Where would you go for help?
- Facilitate a discussion about the relationship between HIV and the need for clean water. (People who are ill find it difficult to collect water or fuel to boil water. HIV damages the natural protection inside the body, so people who are infected are more vulnerable to infections from polluted water. AIDS creates orphans who do not have parents to teach them about clean water. Schoolchildren who have learned these lessons can help the community to understand them.)

Problem box

- Place a problem box or bag in the class.
- Invite children to write their questions and problems and put them in the box.
- Read the questions yourself and select those that are suitable for discussion.
- Invite a student to read the first question.
- Invite the class to answer the question. Add or correct as needed.
- Continue until all questions suitable for answering in public have been covered.
- Tell children who want more help in answering their questions where they can get counselling.
- If the school has no counselling, raise and address the need with the head of the school and the other teachers.

Learning indicators:

- Children can identify at least two HIV/AIDS transmission routes, three signs and symptoms of HIV and can explain the terms HIV and AIDS.
- Children can give examples of, and show empathy with, social problems that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS infections.
- In mentioning ways of prevention, they demonstrate assertiveness (signs of knowing that you can say 'no').
- They know where to seek help in case of problems and actually do so.

A note of caution

Discussions about HIV/AIDS can often focus on non-existent risks (HIV from mosquitoes, sharing cups, toilet seats). It is important that the teacher is well informed, can help the children to focus on the real risks in their lives and can counter misinformation.

Competence:

**Increased awareness of HIV/AIDS,
empathy and risk-avoiding behaviour**