Western Cape Government
Education
FOR YOU

World AIDS Day

This World AIDS Day we urge you to offer support to those who are HIV positive, pledge to stay negetive and also share your knowledge.

The largest obstacle to fight against HIV is not the virus itself, but the lack of knowledge. HIV is preventable, discernible and ultimately defeatable. Here are a few of the most important tools to knowledge:

Discerning

Discernment is the ability to understand truth from fiction and falsehoods. Despite HIV being around for more than 20 years, people remain remarkably ignorant about the facts.

Discernment doesn't just relate to what you believe about HIV & AIDS but also who you believe. Not everything a "scientist" says is true. Learn how to read studies for yourself or use reliable websites with a balanced point of view to find out more.

Don't trust any rumours that may be harmful to others. If you are really in doubt, speak to your doctor about what you've heard or read; they should be able to provide you with proper advice.

Understanding

Knowledge is useless if not within a context. If you don't understand someone's cultural beliefs, personal fears or issues regarding HIV, no amount of knowledge will help that person. Understanding allows you to help yourself or others apply the power of knowledge. For example, knowing that condoms will prevent HIV is not helpful unless you understand why someone doesn't want to use condoms. If you could understand and help people overcome their own fears, they would be able to make use of knowledge.

Courage

Knowledge requires courage. Without a voice, knowledge is dead. And many courageous people have stood up for those with HIV & AIDS. Truth is far more difficult than lies when it comes to HIV.

In your own life, how often have you let truth slip by? If someone says something discriminatory about those with HIV, do you let it pass? If someone you love believes that they are not at risk of HIV, do you challenge them?

People believe myths about HIV because it protects them – it makes them less at risk. Challenging these beliefs can be tricky because people will try to defend them. Have the courage to tell the truth about HIV. It is the only way others will follow.

Hope

Knowledge can be a cruel thing if it is not softened by hope. Knowing there is currently no cure for HIV is knowledge, but hoping that research will uncover new treatments is positive knowledge.

In every place you find knowledge you will find a grain of hope. For example you may know that African potato and garlic doesn't cure or prevent HIV, but you can find out that it does slow the progression of HIV to AIDS. So while you may not agree with African potato being touted as a cure, you can acknowledge that there may be some benefit to those without AIDS.

Realism

Having hope is all very well, but it must be bound by realism. Understanding, for example, that an HIV vaccine is being sought (and you should remain optimistic about this) but that it may take many years for an HIV vaccine to actually be workable and available.

Realism will lead you to understand that the only real hope for HIV lies in prevention. While antiretrovirals do extend life span and so on, they are not sustainable through the next two or three generations of people. What we need to eliminate HIV, is to prevent it being spread altogether.

You and knowledge

If you have knowledge, you have power. You have the power to protect yourself from HIV; you have the power to protect others from HIV. Reach out with what you know – if everyone who had knowledge did so, the world would be a more amazing (and HIV-free) place.