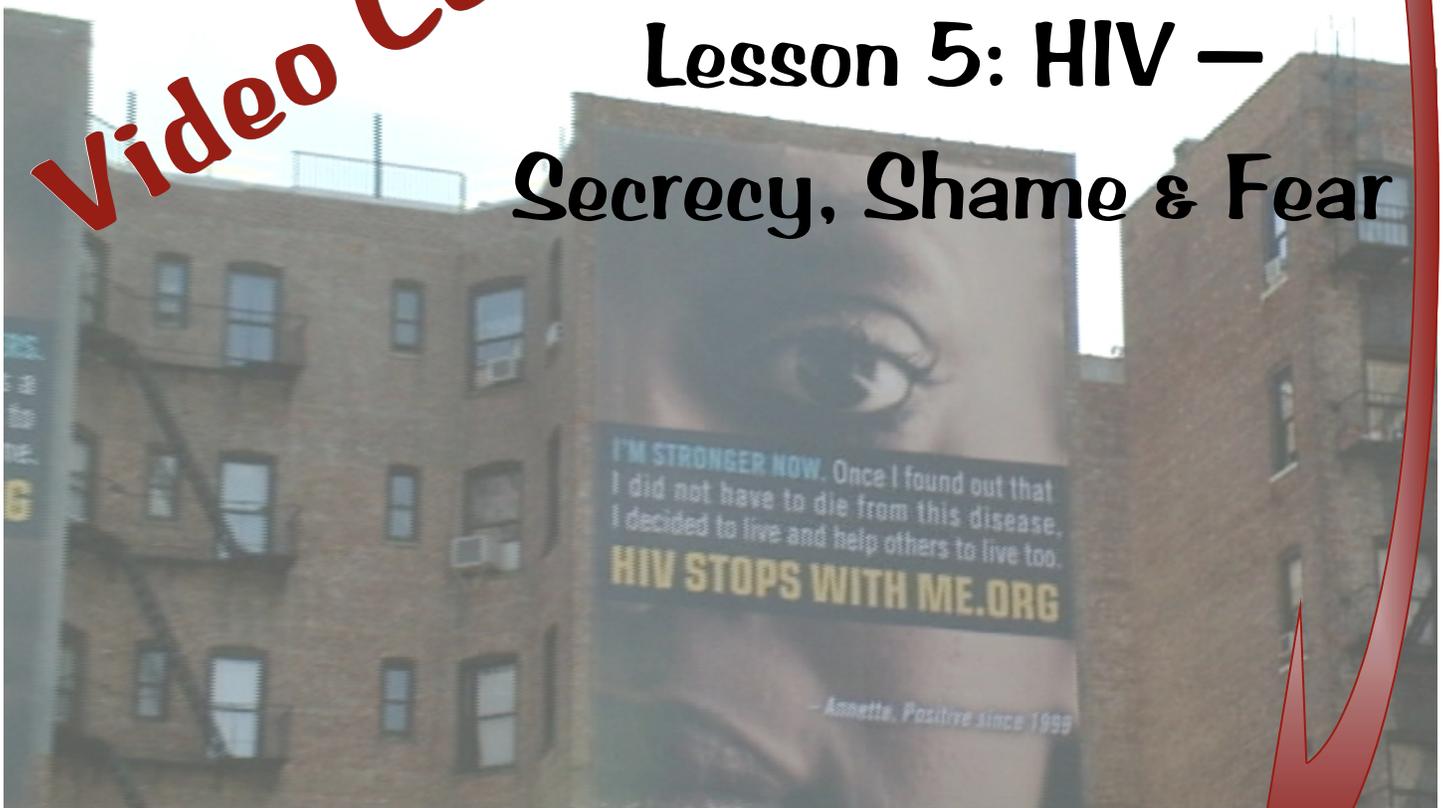


WHY US?
LEFT BEHIND AND DYING



Video Curriculum Modules

Lesson 5: HIV – Secrecy, Shame & Fear



LEARNING WAS NEVER LIKE THIS

Lesson 5: Secrecy, Shame and Fear

Standards:

Health:

1.12.1

1.12.2

1.12.8

2.12.1

2.12.2

2.12.3

2.12.4

2.12.8

5.12.2

5.12.4

7.12.1

Science:

Skills Practiced and Gained:

1.1—1.7

2.1—2.5

Overview

The spread of HIV/AIDS in African and African American communities is aided and abetted by the communities' secrecy, shame and fear about the disease and related social factors. This lesson and video module examines the ways in which secrecy, shame and fear manifest in these communities. The manifestations are sometimes apparent while other times they are subtle. In both cases, the manifestations are multifaceted in the manner in which they help the spread of HIV/AIDS. Secrecy, shame and fear are not unique to these communities and can mitigate the spread of disease in other groups of people. And we find in Lesson 20, "The Project Ends," that secrecy, shame and fear are looming factors in the decision to be tested for HIV.



NOTE: Contrary to the number of the lesson, Lesson 5 may serve you and your workshop participants or students better as a later lesson. The participants/students must be comfortable in discussing highly sensitive topics in this lesson. More importantly, they must be able to trust you and others in discussing these sensitive topics and possibly their own secrets.

Key Concepts

Impact of social stigmas

Social determinants of health

Decision making under social pressures

Common myths about sexual behaviors



Materials for Activities and Educator Background Knowledge

The major activities for Lesson 5 are discussions generated from the video modules. If you are completing the lessons in order, you may want to use the discussion questions posed in the **Closure** section of this lesson as journal prompts now and return to the questions for discussion after Lesson 10—“*Self-Hatred*” or with Lesson 20—“*The Project Ends*.” As indicated in the **Overview**, you will find connections between this lesson and Lesson 20 about making decisions to be tested for HIV under the pressures of secrecy, shame and fear.

Procedure

Part I

View “*Secrecy, Shame and Fear*” video module. After viewing the module use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

Discussion / Journal Questions

- 1) **W**hat new information did you gather from the video module?
- 2) **H**ow do secrecy, shame and fear contribute to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in African and African American communities?
- 3) **W**hat other questions or comments do you have?

Part II

Secrets are kept for a number of different reasons. In a healthy relationship, there are expressions of intimacy that people prefer to keep private. But when secrets are linked with fear and shame, they can lead to separation, betrayal, and self-doubt. The following questions examine the concepts of secrecy, shame and fear as they were presented in the video module.



Part II (continued)

Depending on the size of your workshop/seminar/class, you may want to organize smaller discussion groups.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are some reasons people in the video keep their HIV status a secret?

(links to HIV and promiscuity and homosexuality, the stigmatization and isolation they may face, self-hatred and shame about homosexuality, loss of masculinity or racial identity, etc.)



- 2) What were the repercussions of keeping secrets for people in the clip?
- 3) What are some other secrets that people sometimes keep? Why do they keep them? What are the consequences of keeping these secrets?
(homosexuality, relationships with people they feel pressured not to be with, an interest, passion, or hobby that is socially less acceptable, sexual activity, eating disorders, etc.)
- 4) Some individuals in the video module implied that “Black people know how to keep secrets.” Is there such a thing as secrets that are kept by a particular population? What are some examples of secrets kept by different groups or populations?



- 5) Do you think minority groups have more secrets? Why or why not?

- 6) What did it take for some people in the video module to feel safe to reveal their secrets? What would it take for people in general to feel safe to reveal their secrets?



Closure



Secrets driven by fear and shame have psychological and physical repercussions that are sometimes as harmful as revealing the secret itself. And, there are times when the repercussions of revealing a secret are more harmful. Your students or workshop participants may keep secrets for different reasons and they may not want to share those secrets. However, they may be trying to assess their secrets and resolve inner-conflict regarding them. You may wish to use the following questions as journal prompts. Use your professional judgment on whether you read these journal entries or have the students/participants discuss these questions.



Discussion / Journal Questions

- 1) Do you have anything you keep secret from others? Why do you keep this secret?
- 2) What are some of the consequences, positive or negative, of keeping this secret?
- 3) Do you have an ally you can reveal this secret to, or someone whom you might seek as an ally?
- 4) To whom could you be an ally, and how would you support them?
- 5) Does understanding the nature of secrecy and fear change your thoughts about how you might act? Why or why not?