



#PWNCares: Ending Violence Against Women Living with HIV DISCUSSION GUIDE

Visit pwn-usa.org/pwncares for the link to the full-length video discussed in this guide; short, sharable clip videos; and more information and resources on a variety of topics relevant to women (cis and trans), and trans and gender diverse folks living with HIV.



This discussion guide is designed to be just that—a guide. Use as much or as little as you need to engage your group or conversation partner. As a facilitator, you can pick and choose which questions to ask.

This guide also includes worksheets (pages 6-7) with the discussion questions that can be used in a group setting as a place to write down notes, or individually in self-guided study.

ACTIVE LISTENING ACTIVITY

This activity can be done either as a large group or with a partner. In case of doing this activity with a single partner, you can use or adapt the script below.

Turn to the person next to you. We're going to do a short activity: practicing active listening. That means while your partner is speaking, you're listening. You're not practicing what you are going to say next, but taking in everything your partner is sharing.

Put your hands together palm to palm. The partner with smaller hands is partner B. Partner A will answer the questions first. Partner B's job is to actively listen and silently show your partner with your facial gestures and body language, that you are fully paying attention to what they are sharing with you.

A note about links:

The digital PDF version of this document has clickable links. Click on any of the underlined blue text to learn more. For example, **click here:** pwn-usa.org



*If you'll be using this guide in print, **scan this QR code** with a mobile device to access the digital version of the document with clickable links.*

First, Some Context

INDEPENDENT READING

Before digging into the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the women interviewed in the video, let's ground ourselves in some context.

1 Let's Get Serious: Sobering Statistics

Review the following statistics about women (trans and cis), and trans and gender diverse folks living with HIV and intimate partner violence.

- [According to a 2018 study:](#)
 - **55%** of women living with HIV experience intimate partner violence
 - **24%** of women experience abuse by their partners after disclosing their HIV status
- Persons who experience intimate partner violence are **48%** more likely to acquire HIV than those who do not.
- [Approximately 10% of women](#) currently experiencing intimate partner violence are living with HIV, a prevalence that is almost **10 times** that of women in the general population.

2 When We Talk About Violence, What Do We Mean?

Violence against women and girls, including physical, emotional, or verbal violence, is one of the most prevalent human rights violations. It can look like intimate partner violence or domestic violence, sexual violence, harassment, disclosure of HIV status without consent, withholding access to services or care, and stigmatizing or judgmental comments and behaviors.

Women living with HIV also experience institutional and systemic violence as a result of their status and other intersecting identities like race, sexual orientation, gender expression, or immigration status.

3 Why did PWN-USA create the National Day of Action to End Violence Against Women Living with HIV?

On October 23, 2014, during Intimate Partner Violence Awareness Month, PWN-USA launched the first National Day of Action to End Violence Against Women Living with HIV (Day of Action) to draw attention to the high rates of interpersonal violence, abuse, and systemic brutality faced by women living with HIV - including the high-profile [brutal murders of women following disclosure of their HIV status](#). To honor two of these women from Texas, **Cicely Bolden** and **Elisha Henson**, community members Venita Ray and Morénike Giwa Onaiw, organized to ensure they, and too many others, were not forgotten.

Discussion Questions

FACILITATED CONVERSATION

The following questions should be asked to the full group allowing time for each person to respond.

Questions are in bold italics, marked “Q.”

Facilitation notes and suggestions (not necessarily to be read aloud) are in italics.

- ❓ ***Q: How do you feel after watching this video? You can feel many different, complicated, and even conflicting emotions including sad, empowered, and triggered. What do you need to take care of yourself as we discuss difficult topics?***
- ❓ ***Q: What are some common themes that stood out to you in the video?***
Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.
- ❓ ***Q: How has living with HIV left you more vulnerable to institutional and interpersonal violence ?***
Give participants 3-4 minutes to answer this question.
- ❓ ***Q: What does a future free from violence look like to you?***
Give participants 2-3 minutes to answer this question.

Take a break to check in about your group's physical and mental wellness needs.

GUIDED BREATHING EXERCISE

This **breathing exercise** will help ground you and may soothe symptoms of somatic anxiety (anxiety you feel in your body).

- 1. Sit in a comfortable seated position with both feet on the ground.*
- 2. Breathe in for the count of four, and out for the count of six. As you slowly breathe in, pay attention to what you feel in your nostrils. As you breathe out, notice the movement of your belly. Mark your breaths by thinking, “breathe in, two, three, four, breathe out, two, three, four, five, six.”*
- 3. Practice for 1-3 minutes.*

Resources

LEARN MORE & GET SUPPORT

Social support not only leads to better health outcomes, but is critical for women living with HIV to *thrive*. **In-person support groups** can be very therapeutic. Your local AIDS service organization or clinic may offer support groups. You can locate local services including support groups at www.poz.com/directory.

In addition to local, in-person services and groups, there are national and international groups that host **virtual events**, webinars, and videoconferences, as well as share information, blogs, and other resources for people living with HIV. Here are a few:

- [Positive Women's Network - USA](#)
- [The Well Project](#)
- [The International Community of Women Living with HIV](#) (ICW)
- [Global Network of People Living with HIV](#)

Make sure you are getting **accurate information about HIV**, treatment options, and issues relevant to people living with HIV. Here are a few good sources of HIV-related information and resources:

- www.thebody.com
- www.poz.com
- www.hivplussmag.com

Fear of intimate partner violence may prevent women living with HIV from disclosing their HIV status to their partners. If you are worried about this or about any signs of intimate partner violence, call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)** or visit thehotline.org.

Women with HIV suffer from high rates of depression, and many may feel like their alcohol or drug use is out of control. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Help is available. Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (**SAMHSA**) **National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)**

Visit pwn-usa.org/pwncares for more information and resources on a variety of topics relevant to women (cis and trans), and trans and gender diverse folks living with HIV.

#PWNCares: Ending Violence Against Women

Living with HIV

SELF-GUIDED STUDY

Before watching the video, take a moment to read through the questions below. As you watch, write down thoughts and feelings that present themselves to you. When you're done, reflect on what you've seen and heard by answering the questions.

How did you feel while watching the video? How do you feel after?	
<i>What do you need</i> in order to take care of yourself as you discuss difficult topics?	
What are some common themes that stood out to you in the video?	
How has living with HIV left you more vulnerable to institutional and interpersonal violence ?	

Take a break to check in with yourself about your physical and mental wellness needs.

This **breathing exercise** will help ground you and may soothe symptoms of somatic anxiety (anxiety you feel in your body).

- 1. Sit in a comfortable seated position with both feet on the ground.*
- 2. Breathe in for the count of four, and out for the count of six. As you slowly breathe in, pay attention to what you feel in your nostrils. As you breathe out, notice the movement of your belly. Mark your breaths by thinking, "breathe in, two, three, four, breathe out, two, three, four, five, six."*
- 3. Practice for 1-3 minutes.*

The Truth(s) About Violence Against Women Living with HIV:

Violence against women living with HIV is all too common. Oftentimes, we don't think of certain acts as violence, or think they are "not as serious as the violence others experience," or they happen so often that we dismiss them. Any act of harm whether it is physical, emotional, verbal, or the threat of harm is considered violence and is rooted in inequality—often based on gender or HIV status. BIPOC folks, and transgender and gender diverse folks are more vulnerable to all forms of violence.

<p>MJ said, "Stigma is violence," and Arianna said, "Misgendering someone is violence." How would you complete the sentence: "[Blank] is violence."?</p>	
<p>How can our accomplices and allies support and protect women living with HIV?</p>	
<p>Given the intersectional vulnerabilities to violence for our BIPOC and transgender community members, how can we elevate their safety?</p>	
<p>In your opinion, is violence against women living with HIV discussed as much as it should be? What more could or should happen?</p>	