

# TEACHER'S NOTES

These notes will help you to break down the scenario into various topics so that you can identify areas to explore in more depth with your students. Topics you could consider discussing relating to the scenario are in [square brackets] and further discussion prompts are included below.

## ► SCENARIO 1

### JORDAN

I've been living with HIV for 6 years now. When I got the test result back as positive, I was distraught. I hated myself at first [**self-stigma**], but I've now come to terms with my diagnosis and I have stopped feeling bad about myself because of it. It helps knowing that HIV isn't a death sentence any more – in fact, I have a normal life-expectancy and because I have an undetectable viral load I can't pass on HIV, even if I have sex without condoms.

My family are super supportive and I haven't felt the need to tell my employer because I'm really healthy and my HIV doesn't affect my work [**right to privacy**]. One thing that is tough though is the way HIV is portrayed in the media. The only time I ever see HIV in the news is either when there's a feature about an African country (you'd think that HIV doesn't exist in the UK!) or if someone living with HIV has done something criminal – I don't understand why, even when the story has nothing to do with HIV, the person is often identified as being HIV positive [**impact of media on identity**]. It's depressing because there are so many people living with HIV in the UK who are just leading normal lives and our stories never get told.

Saying that, I try not to get too down about the lack of understanding about HIV. I go to a support group at my clinic every fortnight and I always leave feeling empowered and ready to take on the world. I've also started volunteering with a charity to speak to young people about HIV – I think education is key to tackling the fear and ignorance that surrounds HIV [**ignorance and stigma**].

## TEACHER'S PROMPTS

**Who (or what) in this story is making Jordan feel good?**

Students should recognise the support that Jordan has received from their family and their support group, and how this has helped increase their self-worth. It's likely that Jordan gets different kinds of support from these different people – knowing that their family love them regardless of their status is really important, but it can also be really helpful to speak about their experiences of HIV with others who know how Jordan feels because they are HIV positive too. Students might also discuss how Jordan's understanding of HIV makes Jordan feel better because they know that they can still live a long and healthy life, and effective treatments mean they can't pass on HIV.

### **Who (or what) in this story is making Jordan feel bad?**

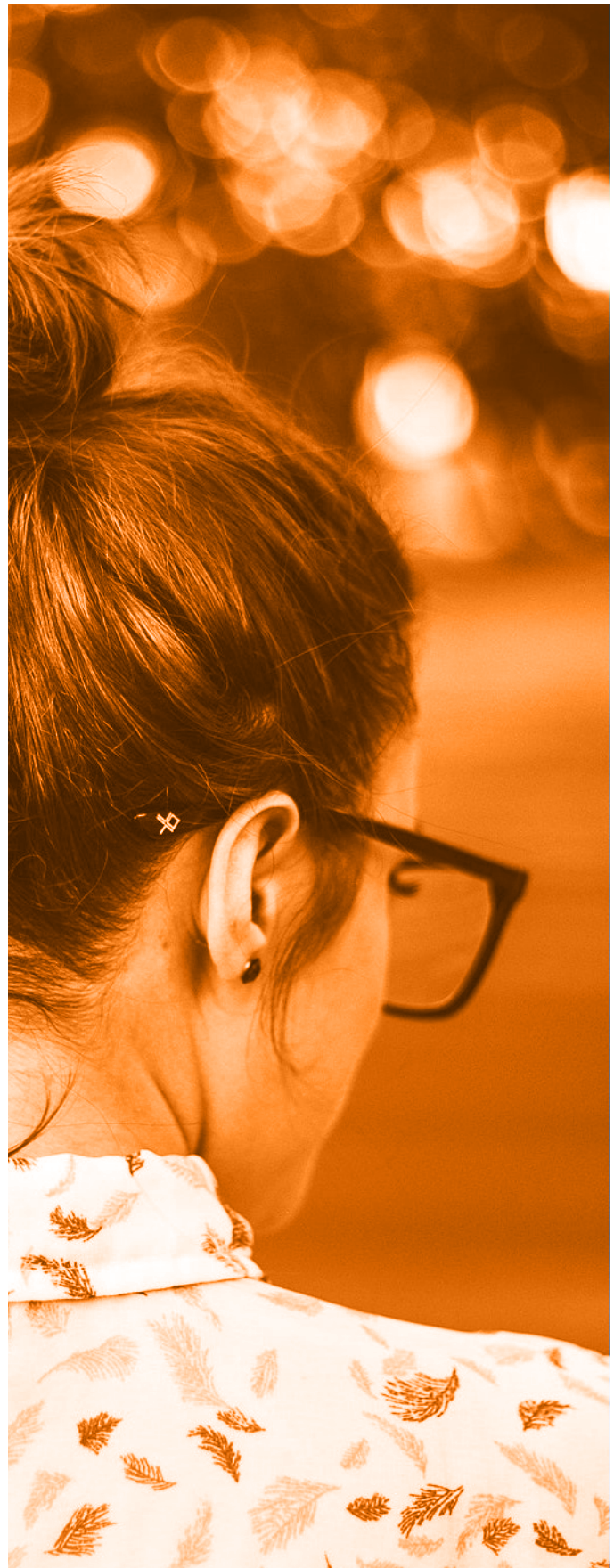
Students should be able to recognise that Jordan does not like the narrow way that the media portrays people living with HIV. Students might also recognise that Jordan initially experienced self-stigma after their diagnosis – “I hated myself at first”. Self-stigma arises when people living with HIV internalise the prejudicial messages they receive from peers and society. Ask students why they think people living with HIV might experience self-stigma.

### **Why do you think Jordan has told some people about their HIV and not others?**

Students might discuss that Jordan doesn't feel the need to tell their employer because their HIV doesn't affect their work. Jordan shares this information with people who can offer them support, such as their support group and family. Students should recognise that people living with HIV have a right to privacy and do not need to tell others about their HIV unless they think it's relevant.

### **Why do you think the portrayal of people living with HIV in the media is important to Jordan?**

Ask students how they think the media might influence young people like them – whether it's how young people are portrayed, photo-shopped images of models or pressure to have the right phone/clothes etc. Following this discussion, students should identify that Jordan feels that the media provides limited representation of people living with HIV. This might make the public think that HIV doesn't exist in the UK,



or only bad people get HIV. How might the media portray people living with HIV in a more positive light? What impact would this have on people living with HIV?

**What are your feelings towards Jordan after reading their story?**

Students should empathise with Jordan because the media can shape their identity and influence their feelings too. They might also be supportive of Jordan's decision to educate others about HIV in order to tackle stigma.

## ► SCENARIO 2

### ALI

I've had a terrible week. I'd been switched onto some new meds a couple of weeks ago, and they've taken some getting used to **[treatment side-effects]**. I decided I would tell my boss about my HIV, so that I can get time off to go to my GP and clinic whilst I was still adjusting to my new treatment. I was a bit nervous about how they would react but I knew that it's illegal for them to discriminate against me for having HIV **[Equality Act]**.

Seems they didn't know about that though. When I told my boss his face went pale. He told me that I'd put our customers at risk by not telling him earlier, and that they'd need to conduct a risk assessment. I knew that was completely unnecessary – you can't get HIV from day-to-day contact – but they insisted. Yesterday I was called into the office and fired **[employment discrimination]**.

I know I could take them to court for discrimination, but I'm not sure if I can face the stress and the expense. The sad thing is I'm probably going to be more cautious about telling anyone about my HIV now. It's so exhausting having to deal with prejudice every day **[impact of discrimination]**.

## TEACHER'S PROMPTS

**Who in this story is making Ali feel bad?**

Students should recognise that Ali's employer has discriminated against them. Discrimination against people living with HIV is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 (and previously under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). Students might recognise that this treatment is unfair because there is no risk of Ali passing on HIV to their customers. They might also mention that Ali's boss did not consider Ali's feelings or try to find out more about HIV.

**Why do you think Ali's boss reacted the way he did?**

Students might suggest that Ali's boss is scared of HIV and worried that Ali is a risk to his customers. They might also suggest that Ali's boss had preconceptions about people living with HIV that may have affected the way he treated Ali. Some people believe inaccurate myths about HIV and how it is passed on. Students should recognise that fear and ignorance contribute to discrimination.

### What impact do you think this discrimination has had on Ali?

Students will see that Ali's experience has made them more nervous about being open about their HIV status. Students should also mention how Ali feels "exhausted" by the stigma; they might discuss the impact that discrimination can have on people's mental health.

### Where might Ali be able to get support?

Students can discuss this with each other and use their phones to do some research about support services. Ali might want to seek legal advice. Also HIV support organisations usually offer a range of support, including 1-2-1 peer support, workshops on telling others about your HIV and various social activities that can make people feel better about themselves and reduce isolation. Support can also be found through online services or helplines like [THT Direct](#). Ali might also find it useful to read information and guides online for people living with HIV.

### What are your feelings towards Ali after reading their story?

Students might talk about feeling sorry for Ali because of the horrible experience they've had at work. How do they think people or organisations might make it easier for people living with HIV to tell others about their HIV status? For individuals, this could include discussing HIV openly with others, wearing a red HIV ribbon, or posting on social media about HIV. For organisations, it could include having HIV-friendly policies, displaying posters and information about HIV in public, and providing HIV training to their staff.

## ► SCENARIO 3

### KAYA

When I was diagnosed with HIV 18 years ago I was devastated: I thought I wouldn't live to see my young children grow up and that HIV would have a terrible impact on my life **[misconceptions about HIV]**. I realise now how wrong I was. HIV has never been a barrier to me doing anything - in fact I've had two more children, both of whom are HIV negative **[ability to have children]** and I expect to live into old age like anyone else.

Telling other people can still be hard, because I'm worried about how they'll react **[stigma]**. You can be pleasantly surprised though. My best friend was fantastic when I told her - she said that she loved me and that she was there to support me in whatever way I wanted. She was also really conscious of the fact that this was my personal information and she didn't tell others about my HIV status without my permission **[right to privacy and confidentiality]**.

The people who don't react well are usually like that because they don't know anything about HIV and they're scared. That's understandable, but it's not fair that people living with HIV should have to do all the educating. I think the Government needs to do more to educate people about HIV.

## TEACHER'S PROMPTS

### **Who (or what) in this story is making Kaya feel good?**

Students should identify that Kaya's best friend made her feel good by supporting her and protecting her confidentiality. They might also discuss how Kaya's realisation that she can have children and live a long life whilst living with HIV will make her feel good.

### **Who (or what) in this story is making Kaya feel bad?**

Students should recognise that the stigma surrounding HIV makes Kaya feel bad because she finds it difficult to tell others about her condition. Some people react badly, and Kaya doesn't think it should be her responsibility to educate all of them. She thinks the Government should be doing more.

### **Why might Kaya be worried about how people will react when she tells them she has HIV?**

Encourage the students to think back to the first activity they did in this lesson – why do they think people judge others? Kaya mentions that people who react badly are those who don't know enough about HIV. There are clearly a lot of people who don't know very much about HIV and this can make it difficult for people living with HIV to be open about their status.

### **What was good about the way Kaya's best friend reacted when told about HIV?**

Kaya's best friend responded in a loving and supportive way – this was really important because Kaya had already mentioned that she finds it tough telling other people about her HIV and she is nervous about how they might react. Kaya's best friend clearly understood this and behaved with empathy. She also protected Kaya's right to confidentiality – this is really important for people living with HIV as their HIV status is private information and should only be shared with their permission.

### **What are your feelings towards Kaya after reading their story?**

Students might express understanding towards Kaya's fears about confidentiality and telling others, and recognise that they should model the behaviour of Kaya's best friend should anyone tell them they are living with HIV. They might also agree with Kaya that more needs to be done to educate others about the realities of HIV today, and that responsibility shouldn't lie solely with people living with HIV.