

Living with Science

CD 3 English Script

Song 1 Intro ...

Mroza: Hi there, you are listening to Mroza of uKhozi FM. As many of you will know, I grew up in Dokodweni in northern KZN. Recently, when I was at home, I spoke to a relative who works at Africa Centre. He told me about the work that the Centre does with the Department of Health to improve the treatment and care of HIV positive people in the region. He explained that although HIV infection is still common, because there are so many thousands on treatment, many people now see HIV as a chronic disease that can be managed, rather than the end of life. I was so excited about this story that I decided to do a special show for the people of uMkhanyakude so that they can share stories and raise questions about living positively with HIV. People of Mtubatuba, Mpukonyoni, Somkhele, Macabuzela, KwaMsane, Nkodibe, Hlabisa, Machibini ... All of you living in uMkhanyakude! Young and old, men and women, nurses, teachers, taxi drivers ... I ask you to call in the next hour and tell our listeners how you are facing the challenge of HIV in your life. One of the Sisters from a local ART clinic will be joining us to answer any technical questions about health or the Africa Centre. We'll be back after this number ...

Song 1

Taxi driver: Hi Mroza, is it ok if I remain anonymous?

Mroza: Yes, of course, brother.

Taxi driver: Some time ago, I made a mistake if you know what I mean? Anyway, I think that it is better for me to check my status, but I just do not have time. I am a taxi driver. I work ten to eleven hours a day in the week and till 3pm every Saturday.

Mroza: Brother, I hear you, but even very busy people like us can still find a way to check our status on a regular basis. Do you have anything to add, Sister?

Sister: Yes, Mroza, I do. Brother, I really want to encourage you to do an HIV test because knowing your HIV status is important for many reasons. Through the work of the DoH and AC there are now more places and opportunities to test so you can choose a time and place that suits you best. For example, you can test for free on a Sunday with the help of a trained counsellor at one of the AC road shows or sporting events. Or, if you prefer you can even test at home. Just listen out in your community for when the next home testing team or road show is coming to your district and take this opportunity to know your status.

Mroza: Yes, I agree, Sister. Knowing your status is important! It is so good to hear that new testing opportunities are available which make testing more accessible and convenient! Is there anyone else out there who wants to test but has not got round to it? Let us know after this hot number ...

Song 2

Mroza: Hi, next we have Hlengiwe on the line who has a story about testing ...

Hlengiwe: Mroza, I have wanted to test for a long time now, but I am so afraid of stigma. Even the other day I went to the clinic to test, but when I was about to go into the room I saw my neighbour sitting in the queue and so I quickly walked away. I do not want people to judge me. You say that we must all test all the time, but it is hard, you know. It is not as easy as you think.

Sister: Hi Hlengiwe. Thanks for calling in. Let me start by saying that I can identify with your fear because I remember how scared I was the first time that I tested. It takes courage, because not only do you face the fear of stigma, but the test results too! I want to remind you that there are many places to test these days. Maybe you will feel more comfortable testing at home or at an AC cultural or sporting event? Wherever you decide to test, I can tell you that it is worth it. If you test positive, you will have access to good treatment and care and if you test negative, as many people do, it will renew your commitment to stay negative. There is another benefit to taking the test. It can help to free us from our prejudice against those who test positive.

Hlengiwe: Why is that?

Sister: Because, to go through the process, we have to face our own fears and insecurity. Our result may be positive, and we have to prepare ourselves for that possibility. So at that point, we are all in the same position and have the same experience as we wait for the results. It is hard for all of us. Those who test positive may have lived lives that are very similar to those whose results are negative. The difference is that, unfortunately, they caught the virus. So, by confronting your own fears and taking the test, you can learn a valuable lesson and make a commitment not to stigmatize people who are HIV positive.

Mroza: Thank you sister for that great message: Face the fear and test because it is worth it for the peace of mind it can give you and because of the knowledge it gives you to challenge stigma and fear in the community. If you test positive, then you know you will have access to good treatment and care and if you test negative, then you have a responsibility *not* to stigmatize because you've been there and you know that it could have been you. In fact, it could have been any one of us. Has anyone faced the fear

recently? Call in and tell us about it...

Song 3

Thoko: Hi Mroza.

Mroza: Hi. Who am I speaking to?

Thoko: Mroza, you can call me 'Thoko'. I am a 16 year old student from a local high school. Last weekend, I decided to go for an HIV test. I could not believe my ears when I was told that I am positive. I am so frightened. The counsellor suggested that I tell someone or join a support group, but I am so scared. It feels like my life is over.

Mroza: Hi Thoko. I am so sorry for the pain and loneliness that you are feeling. I would like you to remember that HIV is not the end. There is good treatment and care available and you can have a long, healthy future with HIV. I also want to remind you that there are many HIV positive people living in this community. I would like to invite another HIV positive person to call in now and speak to Thoko...

Cebi: Hi Mroza, my name is Cebi. I work in a bank in this area.

Mroza: Yes, Cebi...

Cebi: I have a message to Thoko. Do not feel alone, girl, because there are many of us living healthy lives with HIV in this community. A few years ago, I tested positive. I felt just like you. I was shocked, sad and scared. But slowly, with the help of the counsellor, I started to open up and to trust those around me again. I told close family and friends and also my boss about my status so that they could support me on my journey. They make sure that I go to the clinic regularly and take all my pills at the same time every day. In the end, HIV is not such a big deal in my life. I even forget about it most of the time. Hee hee ... I look great! I am happy! I am focusing on other areas of my health and look after myself. I am busy planning my future and that's exciting. I hope these words help you Thoko ...

Thoko: Yes they have, thank you Cebi

Mroza: Yes, thanks Cebi! I like that attitude! I like that message! None of us is really alone, though sometimes we feel like it! There are many people living positively with HIV in the community. And there are lots of negative people who want to challenge the stigma about being HIV positive. Do not be afraid to share your status with those around you because they can support you on your journey to health! Does anyone have any inspiring words to share? Please call in after these songs ...

Song 4 and 5

Bheki: Hi everyone, it is Bheki from Dukuduku! Positive vibrations brothers and sisters! Jah Lives! Yah Man Rastafari!

Mroza: Bheki, you do know that we are talking about HIV today, don't you?

Bheki: Yes, yes ... I just wanted to say that even though we Rastas look after ourselves by eating lots of fruit and vegetables, not drinking alcohol and honoring the body that God gave us, we are not immune from this virus. No matter who you are, no matter what culture you follow, HIV is a threat so please Brothers and Sisters, look after yourselves! Face the fear and do the test! Yah Man! Jah Live!

Mroza: Thanks for that positive message, Bheki. No matter who you are, HIV is a real threat so face your fears and do a test. You deserve it! Do you agree? Please call in now and tell us about it!

Song 6

Mroza: Next we have Mjay on the line from Nkodibe.

Mjay: Hey, I have a question for Sister Mkhize. Last week, I was chilling at home when my girl came over. She was all happy and smiley. Immediately, I could see that something was up. When she told me that she had good news, I thought 'Oh my God! She's pregnant!' But, I managed to keep smiling as she reached into her bag and pulled out a piece of paper. 'Read it!' she exclaimed. I could not believe my eyes when I saw what it was. Her HIV test results! She is negative?! Now, I could understand why she was so happy, because I had told her a while ago that I suspected that I was positive. The truth is that I know my status, but I did not have the heart to tell her that I have HIV. Well, anyway, now I really have a problem because she thinks that we are safe. What am I supposed to do? How can this be so?

Sister: Hi Mjay, thanks for calling in and sharing your story. Yes, it can be true, because there are cases when two people in a relationship do not have the same HIV status, that is one is HIV positive and the other is HIV negative. I really encourage all people to test on a regular basis, so that you can know your status and take the right action. I also encourage you to be honest with your loved ones about your status, because they deserve to know the truth not only for their own protection but also so that they can support you to take your treatment properly.

Mroza: So you really can't know your status if you do not test! Even if we know our partner's status it does not help because sometimes, people in a relationship do not have the same status. Wow! That is news to me. Does anyone else have any questions about testing?

Song 7

Mroza: Hey, who do we have on the line?

Uthisha Zondi: Hi, it is Thisha Zondi. I have a question for you. In 2010, I decided to take up President Zuma's challenge and went to my local clinic to do an HIV test. I had never tested before, so I was most relieved to find that I was negative. Now, I have heard that one should test more than once. Why should I test when I know my status already? Isn't my status going always be the same?

Mroza: Sister, would you like to answer this one?

Sister: Yes, Thisha Zondi, there are many reasons why we should test regularly but let me just mention two. Firstly, if one has acquired HIV recently and does a test, is it possible that it may not be picked up immediately, so we always recommend that you do a repeat test. Secondly, we also all know that sometimes even those people who believe they are in serious relationships have more than one partner themselves or may have a partner who is not faithful and so we might acquire HIV without even knowing we were at risk. But even if you do test more than once and your results are negative, testing is just a good habit to get into. Just like you want to check your heart and your BP, an HIV Test is simple, and almost painless, and just a good way to monitor your health regularly. For these reasons we recommend that everyone make a habit of testing regularly.

Mroza: That is an important message, Sister. We should all test regularly, even if we are in a serious relationship!

Song 8

Mroza: What an exciting show this has been! I can really see from these stories that people are facing the challenge of HIV in their lives. With the expansion of testing to new places and spaces it is becoming easier for us to test and as a result more and more people are learning their status and taking control of their lives.

Sister: Yes, Mroza. You hit the nail on the head! The tides have certainly turned. With the expansion of treatment in this community, people are beginning to see that HIV is not the end of life. As a result people are testing more and more. Testing is empowering because if you test positive, you can access treatment and care and if you test negative, as most people do, it will encourage you to take good care of your health and to stay HIV negative. Testing negative will also equip you with the knowledge of what people who test positive have been through so that you can support them. You will know what it feels like because you have first hand experience of facing that fear too. All of this is so important in our community, that we support each other and in doing so we make our communities stronger.

Songs 9 and 10