

Strategies for living with tuberculosis, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV and AIDS

If you suffer from a disease, it is important that you educate yourself about the disease and find ways of adapting your lifestyle in order to live a high-quality life. Each disease has its own specific guidelines, but there are some general strategies that you can adopt to help you cope:

Think positively.

Educate yourself about your condition.

Find a doctor whom you trust and follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

Take your medicine as instructed.

Surround yourself with people who care about you.

Eat healthily and exercise regularly.

Find things to do that you enjoy.

Avoid stressful situations.

Get enough rest.

Join a support group.

Avoid bad habits such as smoking and abusing alcohol.

Set small, manageable goals that will lead you to a bigger goal.

Respect yourself – you deserve to lead a quality life.

Barbara Kingsley: Positive Heroes

I was diagnosed HIV positive on 29 December 2000 but it wasn't until mid-2007 that I became quite ill. I had persistent flu-like symptoms, headaches, a nagging cough and sores that wouldn't heal. My skin felt as if it was crawling, my legs ached, I felt nauseous and lost weight. Then exhaustion hit. It was an indescribable tiredness and no matter how much I slept I never felt rested.

In 2008 I was hospitalised: it was a terrible time. I remember seeing myself in the mirror - sitting in a wheelchair covered with a blanket. I looked like a little old lady. I was only 39-years old.

I hadn't realised I took my health for granted until it was taken away from me. I thought I was going to die. I saw life differently - I didn't want a bigger house, more money or a fancy car - I just wanted the strength to go for a simple walk on the beach.

That time was life changing. I realised that the best things in life really are priceless.

I began antiretroviral treatment soon after discovering how low my CD4 count was. Within two weeks my energy slowly started coming back. I was lucky; I had the most amazing support system – at work and at home.

A few months into my treatment I watched the 2008 Comrades Marathon and was inspired by the determination, mental and physical strength of the runners. Each had their own personal battle and suffering on the route and each saw it through in their own way. I wanted to be like that too.

I thought, why not? So I bought a pair of running shoes and began running five kilometers in the mornings before work. I felt like Wonder Woman. Five quickly became eight then 10 then 15 km. Before long I was running half-marathons and now I run Ultra Marathons!

I love running – it's my life. Aside from the health benefits the sense of accomplishment crossing that finish line compares to nothing on Earth. We all run our own race, whether we come first or last. We all run across the same line as the guy who comes first. Young or old, black or white, rich or poor – people from all walks of life can come together and run side by side.

Finding out I was HIV-positive wasn't easy. But, I have learned that HIV is survivable and manageable. So I try to tackle life with a positive attitude.

I think I've applied some of the lessons learnt through being sick, to life in general. I know I'm much stronger than I thought and that when I think I can't go on and have nothing left, I can. If someone had told me before I became ill that I'd one day run a marathon I'd have laughed. Impossible! I've since learnt nothing is impossible.

Source: <http://positiveheroes.org.za/barbara-kingsley/> (accessed 13 May 2012)

Activity 3.1 How to live with a disease

30 minutes

Carefully read the case study of Barbara Kingsley and then answer the following questions.

1. How would you sum up Barbara's attitude towards her disease? (2)
2. Identify some of the strategies that Barbara adopted to help her deal with being HIV positive. (10)
3. What message does Barbara's story send to other people living with disease? (2)

Total: 14 marks

