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# PEER-SUPPORT

FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

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## TRAINING WORKBOOK



**EDITION**

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## INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome!

By opening this workbook, you have taken your first step towards becoming a Peer Mentor, congratulations!

In front of you there is theory, practical exercises and checklists, and much more that equip you with knowledge and tools to manage HIV. We hope that the content will benefit you in your role as Peer Mentor and perhaps also for you personally.

The content of the book is largely based on Positively UK's Project 100. Project 100 has trained over 700 Peer Mentors and have together with, among others, the British equivalent of Smittskyddsläkarsföreningen developed a national standard for quality-assured Peer Support for people living with HIV. In order to adapt the content of this book to a Swedish context, knowledge from patient organizations within the field area HIV / STD and the target group has also been gathered.

Overall, the ambition of the book is to provide the foundation for you to develop and learn in a safe environment. We hope that you after completing the course have gained useful skills when working with and managing challenges related to HIV in a Peer context.

Best of luck and do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns about the content, exercises or other sections of the book!

Positive regards,  
Plusverket



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# INTRODUCTION



Outdated perceptions and the historical portrayal of HIV have caused HIV to still be a stigmatizing diagnosis and disease. Many other diagnoses are openly talked about in society, but despite the fact that HIV has become treatable over time, relatively few people are completely open with their positive HIV status.

Receiving an HIV diagnosis affects medical, social, sexual and legal aspects. To have self-knowledge and awareness on how to navigate and handle these aspects can be difficult. Questions like who should I tell? Do I dare to tell? And how will they react? Are common and examples of questions that most people living with HIV at some point have faced.

Failure to address these issues easily leads to stress and shame. Which can lead to some who are diagnosed and living with HIV to become withdrawn and isolated, with poorer mental health as a result.

Peer Support is an antidote to this, and provides knowledge and skills to be able to process issues, make decisions and build more self-confidence in managing HIV. Peer Support also provides access to a network of Peers who are in the same situation. Together we can support and learn from each other and live a better life with HIV.

## WHAT IS PEER-SUPPORT?

Peer Support is a method of sharing experiences and knowledge. The purpose of Peer Support is to provide support and contribute to development, with the ambition that HIV should never be an obstacle.

Peer Support facilitates the opportunity to build understanding and community between Peers. To meet someone who lives with HIV is to meet a person who can deeply understand and relate to the unique problems that can come with an HIV diagnosis. By listening to others who have gone through similar situations, you can develop your own ability to deal with issues related to HIV in your everyday life.

In a Peer Meeting, there are not only opportunities to feel community and empathy with each other, but also being able to practically share personal stories that both inspire and provide concrete everyday tips and advice.

The exchange of experiences and knowledge also provides an opportunity to develop coping skills to deal with and respond to negative attitudes and ignorance about HIV in society.

## WHAT IS A PEER AND A PEER MENTOR?

In Peer Support, we talk about two different roles, a Peer and Peer Mentor.

A Peer Mentor is a person living with HIV who supports, exists or guides another person living with HIV, i.e. a Peer.

In a simple way, you can explain it as the one who has more experience (Peer Mentor) supports those who want to learn and develop (Peer). At the same time, both are Peers and are in that sense equal!



## THE MENTORING CROSS-OVER

A Peer Mentor is both a supporter, friend, advisor and coach. As a supporter, you cheer on and instill courage, as a friend you share your own experiences, as a coach you support in the process of formulating, setting and achieving goals and as an advisor you share your knowledge and information.

Being a Mentor means fulfilling several different functions and adjusting and using these different roles to best help others.



## MENTORSHIP AS PART OF PEER SUPPORT

With mentorship as part of Peer Support, a focus on goals and an intention to work with goals is added to contribute to development. In other words, mentoring gives your Peer the opportunity for purposeful development of both self and one's abilities. At the same time, the relationship between Peer Mentor and Peer should be built in a friendly manner and based on openness, flexibility and needs that emerge in conversations. To understand mentorship as part of Peer Support, we take a closer look at the four pillars of mentoring:

### THE MENTORING PROCESS

A mentorship requires cooperation and a good relationship between Peer Mentor and Peer. By following the list below step by step, we have a mentorship in place with good conditions for a desirable result.

1. Building relationship and trust
2. Agree on the purpose (See clarifying the purpose in next section)
3. Regular communication and reviewing progress

A well-executed process helps you to define needs, provide accurate support and follow your Peers' development.

### FIND THE RIGHT FORMAT

A mentorship works both in one-to-one format or in groups with several people.

As a Peer Mentor in a group, you can either have a leading role or take on the role of sounding board and let the group of Peers collectively lead and decide.

The advantage of one-to-one meeting is that the mentorship can be adapted and individual needs can be better met. Whereas the advantage of coming together in a group is that everyone has similar aims and can support each other.

### CLARIFYING THE PURPOSE

As a Peer Mentor and Peer, you both need to find out and agree on the purpose of why you are meeting. Purpose can be, for example:

- Specific Targeted: eg. Managing telling others about your HIV status, finding a partner or understanding laws and regulations
- Change Behaviors: eg. Stress Management, becoming a better friend / partner or reduce unwanted behavior
- Expand Opportunities: eg. Build self-confidence, dare more or develop personal skills
- Supportive: eg. Build trust and resilience

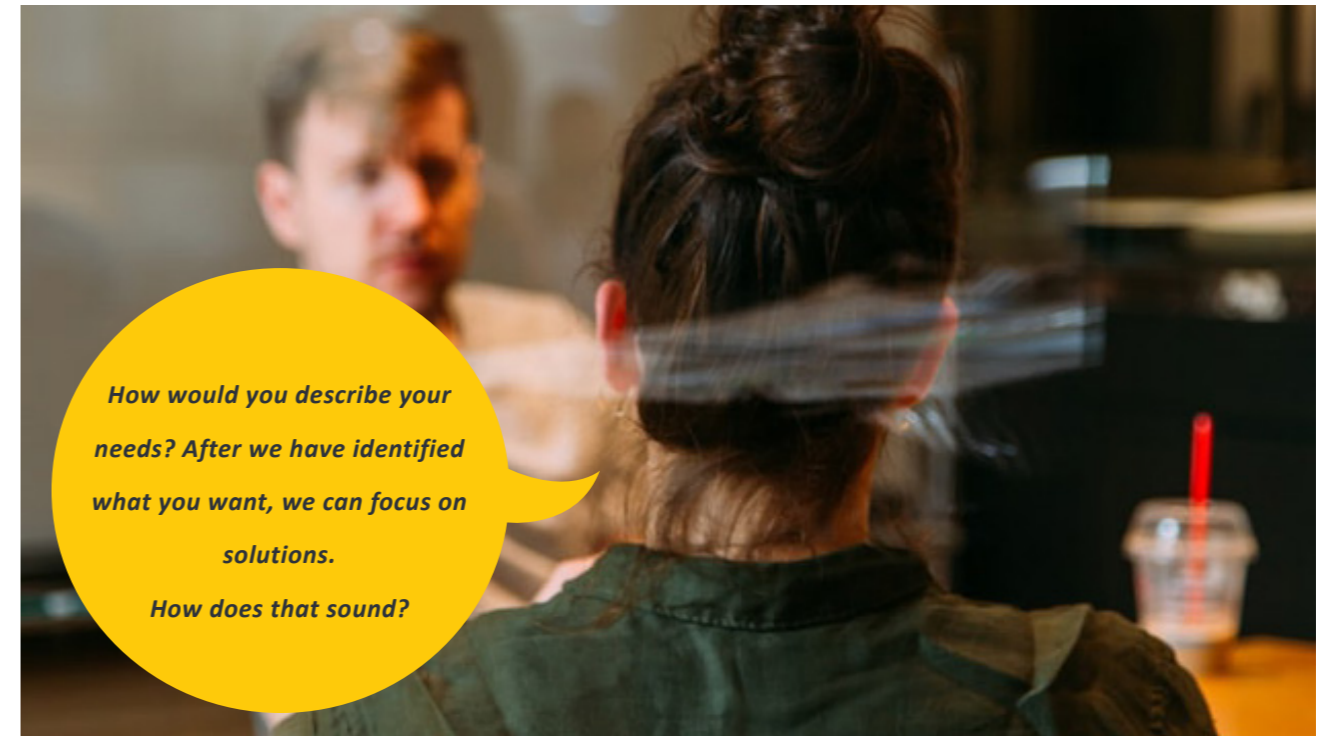
### ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION

How and in what way you and your Peers communicate with each other matters, and establishing how you communicate creates clarity and predictability.

In general, it is best to meet physically. It becomes easier to understand each other and the premise for building trust and a good relationship increases.

In some cases, physical meetings are not possible due to practical reasons. Then phone calls or online communication can be good options. A combination can also be done, as long as it feels ok for everyone involved.

## THE NEED ESTABLISHES THE TYPE OF SUPPORT



*How would you describe your needs? After we have identified what you want, we can focus on solutions.  
How does that sound?*

*Do I really need a Mentor? Do I want to be someone's Mentor? When we think of a Mentor, our thoughts may go to a person who is to teach and instruct, in a formal and rigid setting where you as a "student" must follow a routine, but the role as a Peer Mentor is something else.*

In Peer Support for people living with HIV, the role of Peer Mentor is wide-ranging and often the relationship with a Peer is far more informal than it sounds. But knowing and using Mentoring as a skill means that in your role as a Peer Mentor you become better at how you support others. Which results in your support actually contributing to the development your Peer wants and needs.

Mentorship also helps to create a focus on objectives. In this way, the conditions are created for a developing relationship with the needs of your Peer in focus. Because no matter what type of relationship you build with your Peer, it is the needs of your Peer that govern.

Needs can be divided into practical or emotional. Practical needs can, for example, be to help with basic needs such as securing an income and housing, then you may need to do a referral and get support from other agencies to best help your Peer.

As a Peer Mentor, however, it is the emotional needs you can best meet. Emotional needs can include expanding opportunities and changing unwanted thought patterns, e.g. the view on HIV.

This is where your personal experience and knowledge comes in and you and your Peer can develop a deeper, mutual and relatable understanding.

To ensure that your Peer receives the right type of support, conversations are needed, that you understand each other and that you come to a shared conclusion. With a consensus about the objectives and the needs of your Peer, the situation is favorable for starting to work on solutions and goals.

With communication skills training, learning to ask the right questions and other skills (we will come to these later in the book), you will in your role as a Peer Mentor be well prepared and at the same time be able to adapt your role to support your Peer in the best way.



### WHAT SKILLS DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN A PEER MENTOR?

The skills listed below can be useful in a Peer Support meeting. Tick which skills you think are:

E = Essential, D = Desirable and U = Unimportant

	E	D	U
● Helping Peers to set goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Networking (provide inputs and contacts to other resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Giving practical advice and tips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Managing time and meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Setting personal boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Being clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Managing expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Appropriate self-disclosure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Being professional in the role of Peer Mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Follow up to review and reflect on progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Offer flexibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES DO YOU THINK ARE IMPORTANT TO HAVE AS A PEER MENTOR?

The qualities in the list below can be useful in a Peer Support meeting. Tick which properties you think are:

E = Essential, D = Desirable and U = Unimportant

	E	D	U
● Consistency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To be well-informed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Sense of humour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To be reliable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To be present	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Self-aware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Holds interests and hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To convey confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To be available to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Accepting open to differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● To be tolerant of mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## SIX QUALITIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE PEER SUPPORTER

To be a Peer Mentor is to take on a multifaceted role with the need for several skills and attributes. We can summarize the characteristics and skills with the following six attributes.

1.) ...present, observant and deep listening

2.) ...working well with others

3.) ...committed to role as Peer Mentor

4.) ...open to learning

5.) ...flexibility

6.) ...capable of solving problems and offering solutions

## BOUNDARIES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Setting boundaries means jointly establishing rules and clarifying what is acceptable in a relationship.

Clarity counteracts diffuse communication and ambiguity, and means that both Peer Mentors and Peers know what they can expect from each other. In Peer Support, we divide boundaries into three different categories: Personal, Emotional and Organizational.

Think of the boundaries as a set of rules that come into force as soon as you meet someone. But also remember to always discuss and communicate boundaries with your Peer!

### PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

- Focus on the individual and avoid commenting on obvious mistakes or odd behaviors
- You have the right to decide what you think is right, as long as it is acceptable in the role of Peer Mentor
- If a working relationship does not work out, you have not failed in your task

### EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Try to be understanding of others' background, situation and life choices, if you do not have all the information you may not understand the whole picture
- Do not assume that you share the exact same experience, even if you have been through the same problem
- Respect others' ways of dealing with problems

### ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES (PEER-MENTOR IN AN ORGANIZATION)

- You are within your right to question the organizations work with boundaries and how it works to ensure clear roles and expectations
- As a Peer Mentor, it is your responsibility to keep up to date and maintain contact with the organization
- Support in your role as Peer Mentor is both your right and your responsibility to accept

## SETTING BOUNDARIES

Setting boundaries, asserting one's own space and taking up space is not straightforward for everyone. To get started with setting boundaries, there are some simple tricks and tips.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ What's ok for you? Establish your own boundaries                                 | ✗ Hand out your home telephone number or meet at your home address |
| ✓ Avoid getting into a situation that could be misunderstood                       | ✗ Get involved in an intimate relationship or sexual relationship  |
| ✓ Before you say 'yes', reflect and think about what your response may signal      | ✗ Stand for any harassment or violence                             |
| ✓ Enter your role as Peer Mentor and focus on the needs of your Peer when you talk | ✗ Lend, buy, sell or give to/from one another                      |

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality involves a set of rules or a promise that limits access or restricts access to places or information. When we talk about HIV, eg, it may be appropriate to keep a conversation confidential, so that information about what has been said in a meeting is not spread to others. However, there are exceptions when it may be appropriate or even an obligation to breach confidentiality, for example in the event of a risk of self-harming behavior, suicide or plans to harm or exploit another person.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ✓ Highlight and raise concerns immediately if anything offensive is being disclosed in a conversation  | ✗ Promise to maintain confidentiality indefinitely  |
| ✓ Take care around the topics you discuss and what you as the Peer talk about                          | ✗ Disclose personal information about others  |
| ✓ Anonymize all information you share with others, make sure it can not be traced to a specific person | ✗ Disclose information without someone else without their consent unless there is a risk someone gets hurt. |
| ✓ Be conscious and aware of what you disclose about yourself   |   |

## EXERCISE!

### DIFFICULT SITUATIONS!

You're out on the town on a Saturday night with a friend. At a restaurant, you meet Emil, whom you met on a joint excursion for people living with HIV, and his friend. Emil disappears into the toilet for a short while and his friend asks how you know each other.

- What issues does this raise?
- What do you do?

You receive a friend request from a Peer on Facebook

- What issues does this raise?
- What do you do?

One of your Peers calls you and tells you that they are in the hospital due to an infectious disease and wonders if you can visit them at the hospital. They are worried that you will not be able to meet next week.

- What issues does this raise?
- What do you do?
- 

You have just returned from a Peer-Support excursion and received a message from a person who was also on the trip, asking for the contact details of a third person who was also on the excursion. You know that the person asking is lonely and isolated

- What issues does this raise?
- What do you do?

You've been in contact with Adam for a couple of weeks and helped him get back on his feet after him being recently diagnosed. You have chatted and you ask if you will be seeing him as usual the following Friday. Adam replies that he does not think so, followed by a sad emoji.

- What issues does this raise?
- What do you do?

## CHECKLIST FOR PEER SUPPORT

- ✓ Actively listen to what the person is saying

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  - ✓ Help your Peer prioritize what is important to them

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  - ✓ Accept your Peers as they are

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  - ✓ Be clear about your role, what you can and can't do.

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  - ✓ Provide tips and advice on other agencies and services that your Peer can benefit from

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  - ✓ Reassure your Peer that what they say in the conversation stays in the conversation
- ✓ Have basic knowledge of laws and regulations

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  - ✓ Take advice from others to become better at providing support

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  - ✓ Ask Peers, other than the ones you support, to support you

---

  - Present a consistent approach to anti-discriminatory practice- do not ignore discriminatory statements from Peers. Respectfully state that you disagree

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  - ✓ Be aware of your own values and attitudes

---

  - ✓ Be respectful and encouraging



## EVALUATION OF MY OWN SKILLS AND QUALITIES

This exercise is for you to be able to reflect on your own skills and qualities in the role of Peer Mentor. Based on where you are today, go through the list and tick how you think you master each quality/ skill.

	Excellent	Good	Needs more development
Being flexible to the needs of others			
Tolerance for mistakes			
Manage expectations			
Manage time and meetings			
Give feedback			
Give information			
Challenge and spur			
Show empathy			
Sharing from your experiences			
Use silence			
Reading body language			
Use body language			

### SELF-REFLECTION PART 1

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## COMMUNICATION & CONVERSATION SKILLS



**Communication is an important part of Peer Support. In this section we go through what creates a good conversation and go through communication practices.**

### POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Positive communication means that you as a Peer Mentor use different techniques to contribute to meaningful conversations. Your Peer will feel heard and understood, and the conversations between you can go deeper and address the right things. With positive communication, the foundation is laid for good Peer Support.

To begin with, **empathy** allows us to understand, feel and take in the perspectives and experiences of others. You do not have to fully understand everything, but you can understand someone's situation.

With empathy, a conversation is created that allows experiences to be shared freely without risking judgmental reactions.

Sometimes it takes time for someone to open up and share their experiences. Therefore, it can be good to show **patience** and also allow moments of silence. The breaks provide the opportunity to collect thoughts or process information without reasoning being interrupted or changing direction.

To further help keep focus in a conversation, it is good to **remove distractions**. Fiddling with cell phones and pens, creaking chairs and computers buzzing in the background are examples of potential distractions.

We do not just communicate in words. Note the **tone** of your Peers voice. The volume, pitch and tone can be important signals about how the person feels about a certain issue. You can also use your tone and tempo to interact with what you say. In relation to tempo, it is also important to think about **who is speaking**, do not interrupt each other and avoid too many quick exchanges of opinions. Giving others the time to speak provides the foundation for good collaboration.

Talking about sensitive topics can cause the conversation to change direction or comparisons to be made. You do not have to control the conversation, but focus on what is being said and the **overall message** and ask a question to, if possible, help the person express the core of their thoughts. You can also put your Peer at ease by nodding sympathetically, smiling and displaying an **open body language**. Being aware of your body language during a conversation is a good rule of thumb to ensure that you send out welcoming signals. Also **avoid commenting on behaviors, choices, or other personal characteristics** that may be perceived as offensive.

### ASKING QUESTIONS

Questions are a useful and often underestimated tool when building a good relationship and a good conversation. Open questions such as "How did you feel then?" or "What do you think it depends on?" can be used to obtain valuable information. Open-ended questions also help to broaden the conversation by encouraging afterthought and reflection. Questions that can be answered with a yes, no or with a short reply are called closed questions.

## COMMUNICATION & CONVERSATION SKILLS

Examples of closed questions are "Have you talked to your doctor about this?", "When was the last time you went on a date?" or "Is this your first time talking about this?"

Closed questions are especially useful for verifying facts and establishing consensus.

Another type of question are hypothetical questions. These types of questions can help your Peer explore alternative paths and mindsets.

Example, hypothetical question:

**What would it look like to you?**

For example, a hypothetical question can be used to expand on dreams or desires. The answer can be valuable in helping to set goals and visualize a future scenario.

### ACTIVE LISTENING

Affirm, reflect and summarize, to listen actively involves both passively taking in information and actively paying attention to what is being said in the conversation.

To **affirm** means to emphasize, through a comment or body language, something that your Peer has done well. It can be to inform about a strength, a difficult situation that has been handled well or an achievement of some kind.

Affirmations are usually instantaneous. We often naturally and routinely affirm in conversations. But to use affirmations as a skill in a conversation requires timing and that you follow and listen to what your Peer is saying. By affirming, you can build trust, show interest and give self-confidence.

Example, affirm:

**Peer:** This weekend I told my best friend that I have HIV, she got scared and got so weird, I do not know what to do now. Maybe it was not so smart to tell anyway.

**Peer Mentor:** It was brave, and strong of you to open up, it's not always easy to tell.

To **reflect** means that you as Peer Mentor give feedback on what you hear your Peer say, by reflecting their words it provides the Peer the opportunity to 'hear' their own words back.

The skill can be described as repetitions or paraphrasing what your Peer says but also try to access and expose underlying emotions. The latter aims to guess or try to understand underlying factors of thoughts, behaviors or things that have happened, with the intention that the information may be helpful for your Peer to understand their own behavior. However, to reflect is not direct questions, your own opinions or comments on whether something is good or bad.

Another skill that you can use is summaries. Summaries is to paraphrase what your Peer has said and expressed. Summaries can be helpful to ensure that you have a mutual understanding. The skill can also be helpful when you want to summarise and compare what your Peer said earlier with what was just said in an ongoing conversation. Summarising is also a way for your Peer to "listen" to what they say and get a chance to correct themselves. By following and actively listening and being able to summarize what your Peer is saying, you also show that you are present and observant.

After summarizing what you heard your Peer say, it might be a good idea to end with a question like "Did I include everything you talked about?" or "Did I understand you correctly?"

# EXERCISE!

## COMMUNICATE WITH QUESTIONS

In pairs of two. In this exercise, we will practice with closed, open and hypothetical questions in two different parts. Start by writing down your interests and / or hobbies and share them with your partner. Then your partner asks you about your interests / hobbies with the help of closed questions. When you are done, you switch roles with each other.

My interests / hobbies

.....  
.....

How did you experience the discussion when you were asked closed questions?

.....  
.....

How do you experience the discussion when you were only allowed to ask closed questions? What information did you get?

.....  
.....

Repeat the exercise again, but this time by using all types of questions (open, closed and hypothetical).

Write below how you experience the discussion and the difference compared to just using closed questions.

.....  
.....  
.....

## SELF-DISCLOSURE?



**As a Peer Mentor, your experiences with HIV will be your strength. Through your experiences, you can relate to and help others. But how much is appropriate to share and are there times when you should not share your experiences?**

Our experiences are central to Peer Support. It is the common denominator that creates understanding and enables us to build a relationship based on a deeper understanding, so how can you use your experience to best help your Peer?

**Relevance** - only share your experiences as much as is helpful and relevant to your Peer. Maybe you have dated and have experience in telling about your HIV to several partners, at

the same time as your Peer wants to be able to date and tell? Briefly share your experience as one example, if your Peer is interested in more, they are likely to ask.

**Relationship building** - your free time, where you come from, interests or the like are good examples that you can always share. You do not have to have things in common to create good conditions for a good Peer Support conversation, but it allows you to get to know each other in a relaxed way and build a relationship with each other.

At the same time, there are risks for both you and your Peer if your experiences are used incorrectly. Therefore, it is important to be aware

of how and what you share and how you handle others' experiences. For example, avoid ending up in a situation where both you and your Peer share intimate or personal details too quickly. Sometimes people share to create an image of themselves or to say something provocative. In those situations, just affirm the information without responding with the same type of information.

Another situation that you and your Peer should be aware of is if the conversation quickly becomes too personal and emotional. This type of reverse relationship building damages the mentoring process, and it is easy to end up in a caring position, without really knowing why.

## TALKING & TELLING ABOUT HIV



*Telling others about our HIV status is one of the most challenging things about living with HIV. Concerns and worries about what others may think can feel both daunting and overwhelming. In this section you will get general knowledge talking about HIV with others. You can use this knowledge and advice both privately and in your role as a Peer Mentor.*

### SEXUAL PARTNERS & DATING

When you start seeing a new partner, your HIV status will inevitably be at the back of your mind. Do you tell them your status soon after you have met? Do you tell them once it seems things are becoming serious and moving to a sexual level? Or do you wait until the relationship is blossoming and you feel that a serious commitment may be on the horizon? Should you not tell them at all? In general, there is no right or wrong, it is up to each person to make their decision about, how and when they tell.

One tip can be to let the other person get to know you and find out who you are as a person, before the person learns that you are living with HIV. Hopefully they see you for who you are, and not just your status. Another advice is to practice how you tell and become comfortable with your status, eg. in front of a mirror or with a friend. Being comfortable and confident when disclosing can have an assuring effect, both on yourself and others. To give the person you are telling the space to process you can also have the conversation in a place where it is calm and quiet.

If you have previously told and your experience was not

what you wanted, remember that there are at least as many people as reactions and that it can take time for a person to land in some kind of final stance. If you are on treatment and have already had sex, you have been responsible. HIV is not transmitted during treatment and you have not done anything wrong or exposed anyone to risk (We assume here that you have a well-adjusted treatment).

### FAMILY & FRIENDS

Telling someone you already have an established relationship with can give a sense of liberation, and family and friends can be valuable support. At the same time, it can feel difficult to tell. For many, there is uncertainty about how it will be received and how close ones will handle the information.

Here are some brief tips on telling family and friends:

- Tell them there is something important you want to talk about
- Tell them why you want them to know
- Tell them that your health is good and that they do not have to worry about your health
- Do not be afraid to show feelings, but at the same time pay attention to how you disclose and what you are saying
- Feel free to read up so you're able to answer the most basic things about HIV

Keep in mind that even for family members and friends, it can take time to process and manage the information. In order to facilitate their process and relieve you, feel free to offer contact to an organization that can answer, explain and give them family support.

With information and knowledge, you can also provide answers to questions, correct potential misconceptions about HIV and instill confidence in your loved ones that you are equipped and capable of managing HIV. You can then decide if you want your status to be kept in confidence between you. If you are not requesting confidentiality, there is a chance that your status will come out elsewhere, and if you are not ready for that, then you should ask for confidentiality.

## FIVE QUESTIONS FIVE TIPS - CHECKLIST FOR DISCLOSING

If you have not disclosed yet or feel unsure if you should tell more people about your HIV, use these five questions to gain support in making the right decision.

### WHO?

...do you need to tell?

### WHEN?

...should you tell them?

### WHY?

...are you telling them?

What are the benefits to you and to them?

### WHERE?

...is the best place to have this conversation?

### WHAT?

...do you want to tell them about your HIV?

And what are you expecting from the person you are disclosing your HIV status to? What might happen?

### FIVE TIPS BEFORE TELLING OTHERS

1. You don't have to tell everyone. The choice is yours about whom and when to tell.
2. Consider why you want to tell someone, whether there is a real purpose for you to tell this person or if you simply want to "dump" your feelings.
3. Disclose to two people so they can talk to each other.
4. You have not done anything wrong. You have a virus and do not have to apologize or be apologetic towards anyone.
5. Keep it simple, you do not have to tell your life story.

# TALKING & TELLING ABOUT HIV

## IN THE WORKPLACE

HIV is a disease, and is in the legal sense considered as a permanent disability.

Employers do not have the right to demand to know your HIV status, but is there still reason to tell?

Not really. In cases where you need to take samples or visit your doctor, you can just mention that you have a doctor's appointment or a private matter. Collective agreements usually regulate whether you receive paid leave or are allowed to take full leave. A good employer should, in dialogue with you, have no problem with this, no matter how you solve it.

Should you choose to tell, the employer has a responsibility to make reasonable adjustments to adapt the work in such a way that it works for you, e.g. to allow time for doctor's appointments. The employer is also responsible for a work environment where discrimination and bullying should not occur.

The Discrimination Act is there to protect people with some type of disability from being treated worse or disadvantaged. Everyone living with HIV is thus also included and protected by the Discrimination Act, which applies to both workplaces and society at large. The law can be helpful if, for example, you should be denied employment or for some other reason end up in a dispute with the employer.

At the same time, it can be a good idea to plan how, when, what and to whom you tell about your status. Talk and explain to your employer why you tell and what they can do for you is also good, then they can better understand how they can support you. Also tell them that you will continue to do great work and take your responsibilities in the workplace.

## IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

With a well-adjusted treatment, today there are no requirements to tell prior to minor examinations, such as vaccinations, blood tests or routine dental care. For major surgical procedures, where there is a risk of, e.g., stab and wound injuries, you need to state that you are carrying a blood infection.

If you visit primary care for problems that you do not think are related to your HIV, it may still be a good idea to tell your doctor that you are living with HIV.

The doctor usually has the information from your medical record, but to provide good care and ensure that the doctor has the right information, you can still tell.

All healthcare professionals have a duty of confidentiality through their work and telling healthcare professionals can be good training and a first step even if you have not told anyone else.



# EXPERIENCES OF TELLING

In pairs of two. Individually, think for a moment about your experiences of telling someone that you live with HIV. Choose a good and a bad experience from situations where you have told someone else that you live with HIV. A person begins to share their two experiences, your partner listens and notes the experiences and gives feedback (focus on the bad experience) based on what we have learned in the section "Talking & telling about HIV". When we're done, you change roles.

My good experience

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My bad experience

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Feedback from my partner to me

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Ⓞ My partners good experience

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Ⓞ My partners bad experience

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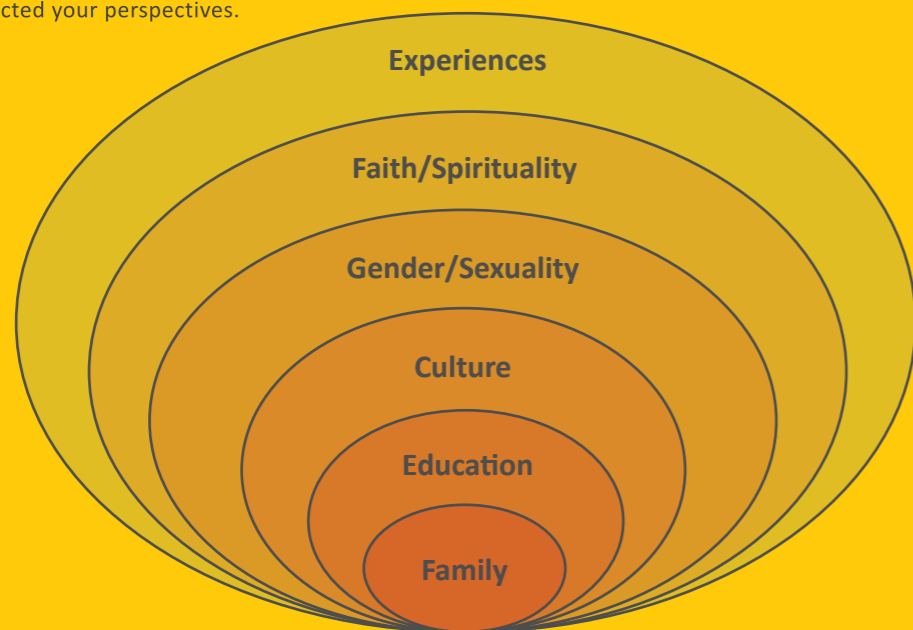
Ⓞ Feedback from me to my partner

.....

# EXERCISE!

## WINDOW OF THE WORLD

The six words and circles represent different parts that shape / shaped us. Start with family and work your way through the circles, thinking about who you are and what characterizes you within each circle. Finish by reflecting on how you think your circles have affected your perspectives.



### SELF REFLECTION PART 2

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## THE INTERACTION PROCESS PEER-MENTOR-PEER

*Peer Support is based on mutual understanding. To get there, we need to create a good relationship between Peer Mentor and Peer. With a good relationship comes open conversations, authentic meetings and overall better conditions to succeed with Peer Support.*

A good relationship between Peer Mentor and Peer is initiated similar to many other relationships by **getting to know each other**. In this stage, for example, talking about the weather, interests, favorite food or other light topics can be discussed. After this introduction and getting to know each other, it is a good idea to clarify in which way and how you as a Peer Mentor can assist. When are you available? What can you do as a Peer Mentor? In what way should we communicate?

Communicating the offer externally to your Peer also clarifies your role, capacity and own boundaries for yourself. Exactly how and what you and your Peer then agree on is up to you. It does not have to be an overly formal procedure, but your Peer needs to know what they can expect to get out of the meetings with you.

With the introduction completed, we can start talking and dive into stories, thoughts and reflections.

Active listening is central to both moving the conversation forward and helping your Peer explore the root of problems, thoughts and questions. From the conversation you should get information to be able to map out and identify areas that need to be addressed and work with. Combine questions with sharing your observations to ensure you are on the same level. Reconciling and asking questions can also help your Peer to understand their situation and life story. This way, your Peer can put their finger on what they themselves would like to work on.

This process can be described as a search for puzzle pieces. It can take different lengths of time to find the pieces and they may not always fit, so be patient. Showing understanding and sensitivity are important factors in building trust and a good relationship. It is also connected to the essence of Peer Support, that it is the need that governs.

### FROM CONVERSATION TO ACTION

The second half of the process focuses on action. As a Peer Mentor, how do you support and help your Peer move from talking to action?

Before we start looking for solutions, we should have gotten to know each other and established our role as Peer - Mentor. We have had the conversations and with the help of the tools in this method book also mapped out the needs of your Peer and identified what they may want to change, develop or get support in.

If the first half of the process can be compared to an applicant who over time approaches a finished puzzle, you now need to make sure that you go back and take a bird's eye view. What do we see in front of us? A broad approach is important in order to be able to provide several types of solutions to the needs we have identified. The openness of the process of exploring problem solving helps to avoid casual solutions and quick routine solutions, which may not be the right ones for your Peer.

In this process, you as a Peer Mentor can give alternative / additional suggestions providing perspective. At the same time, from the information you already have, you can remind yourself of the strengths of your Peer to strengthen them in finding solutions themselves. Through conversations you will finally find solutions and an action plan. You can then explain how and in what way you can support. At this point, as a Peer Mentor, you need to use your mentorship and set reasonable goals with your Peer.

Your relationship with your Peer will change after this. You now have the task of following your Peer and the goals you set, as well as encouraging and celebrating success during the journey. The role in this situation is generally more passive than in the search for problems and solutions. Depending on the outcome, you can then set new goals together or end the relationship as a Peer Mentor and Peer.



# PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST PEER-MEETING

Preparation, both practical and mental, is a must for a well-conducted meeting. As a Peer Mentor, how do you answer the following questions?

As a Peer Mentor, What preparation could or should you make for your first Peer Meeting?

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What do you think your Peer wants out of the meeting? Is there any way you can find out?

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What do you want out of and achieved during the first meeting?

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How will you begin and end the session?

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# FIRST MEETING CHECKLIST

## THE PRACTICAL

- ✓ Prepare the room and test technology, sound and image if the meeting takes place online
- ✓ If you share space, tell others that you are expecting a visit and wish not to be disturbed
- ✓ Prepare water, coffee, tea or other beverage and have paper handkerchiefs on hand
- ✓ Put your phone on mute

## THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Welcome your guest and introduce yourself and your status
- ✓ Start getting to know each other, if appropriate start asking questions about HIV and the person's relationship to HIV
- ✓ Tell us about yourself, and how you as a Peer Mentor can be helpful

## ENDING

- ✓ Agree on how to communicate (between meetings)
- ✓ Communicate clearly about how available you are
- ✓ Set a preliminary date for the next meeting or opportunity to contact
- ✓ Discuss what the next meeting might contain

## HOW DO I SUCCEED WITH EMOTIONAL CONVERSATIONS & AT THE SAME TIME SETTING GOALS?



*Talking about issues that touch and evoke emotions is not always easy.*

*Adding a focus on goals, development and change also places demands on listening in, understanding and having the ability to move the conversation forward in a constructive manner.*

In the next section, we focus on goals and you will partake in knowledge and concrete Peer Support tools. There are a number of tools that can be used in Peer Support, one example is to make a practical review - what practical requirements are needed to achieve the goal? Another example is the pendulum, which means that you express a perspective that intends to shift views and broaden perspectives.

Regardless of which skill we choose - to be able to use the right skill at the right time and get the desired effect, timing is needed. We get timing by understanding the person we meet and knowing where the person is on their own emotional register.

In short, when we master reading emotional expressions and situations in conversation, we become better at using the right skills - at the right time.

Understanding the interaction between people and how emotions affect us is fundamental for being able to give another person support. Use your own experience and the exercises in the book to practice and develop techniques in how we read other people to meet them where they are.

Also feel free to discuss with each other how you experience emotional expressions and how you express your feelings yourself.

When you get scared, hesitant, angry, etc. How is it expressed?

## EXERCISE!

### HOW'S IT GOING? A SUPPORT TOOL IN PEER SUPPORT

How's it going? is a tool for mapping well-being in a holistic perspective. After you or your Peer has done the exercise, you can ask questions such as: What does a third mean to you in this question? What is needed to reach a four? Have you been a runner-up? What would it look like to be a five on that question? Are you happy with that? If it's too low, would you like to do something about it? The tool can be used several times over time to see developments and changes.

1. I am able to manage my health, including HIV

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. I am happy with the healthcare and treatment I receive

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. I have good connections with friends

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. I have good connections with family

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. I have good connections with sexual and romantic partners

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. I can reach out to people or services around me, when needed

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. I have the confidence to manage life's challenges

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. I am able to meet my basic needs (accommodation, food & warmth)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. I feel positive about myself and my future, most of the time

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## SETTING AND REACHING GOALS



*Before we jump into the section on tools for working with goals, we can think for a while about the question, why should we set goals? How can goals help us live better lives with HIV?*

There are several purposes for which we use goals in Peer Support. Goals affect our attention, how we think and value information. In other words, it can help us focus. The actual process of formulating goals can also be significant, especially for someone who knows what they want - but has not yet tested SMART goals. For others, the search may be most valuable as it highlights which parts the person needs and wants to work with.

Let's take two examples, a Peer who feels isolated and wants more contact and socializing may need better relationships instead of more relationships?

Another Peer has found out that it is a love relationship they want, but the dating apps do not give results, maybe you as a Peer Mentor can give suggestions and share your

experiences of meeting your partner through a mutual friend?

In both of these examples, the goal helps to focus on what is important and what really means something to us, while at the same time concretizing what we need to do.

Goals also help us find out if we are trying to reach our goals. With clear and concrete goals, we can observe progress and what we have done. The goal simply helps us to follow up if we are on our way to where we want to be. It is important to remember that goals do not have to mean that something is bad or substandard. See it more like writing a book, and in the next chapter the author wants the story to be a bit more about x or y. Thus, setting goals is something that everyone can work on, no matter what situation they are in right now.

Also remember to set goals together, in dialogue with each other. If you really want to emphasize that you and your Peer set a goal for your Peer, shake hands on it!

## SMART GOALS

SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attractive, Relevant and Timed) goals is a tool and framework used to influence and change behavior. SMART goals facilitate change and by setting SMART goals together with your Peer, the possibilities of a development in the desired direction increases.

### SPECIFIC

Specific goals are easier to understand and follow up. A clear and distinct goal makes it easier compared to goals that are vague, or can be interpreted in several different ways. For example, "my goal is for me to exercise more" is not specific or clear, we do not know, for example, how often, when or for how long. A better, specific goal is "I will walk at a fast pace for 20 minutes every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday".

### MEASURABLE

To know if the goal has been achieved, the goal needs to be measurable. The example above is measurable, was there a walk every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday? Did each session last 20 minutes? It is often possible to adjust how measurable a goal should be, it is up to you and your Peer to decide. Measuring the goal also helps to determine if the goal is right or if the level of ambition should be adjusted.

### ATTRACTIVE

Large goals can be broken down into smaller sub-goals. It is easier to reach small goals step-by-step, otherwise you risk reaching too big and burn yourself out. Goals need to be attractive and within reach, it should feel like they can be reached. After that, you can always set new goals.

### RELEVANT

A goal that is relevant is clear and has a clear connection to what your Peer wants to achieve. Relevant goals help to contribute motivation, whether it concerns goals in relation to behavior, development, health or otherwise.

### TIMED

The goal needs to have a time when it must be met. Setting timed goals is important to not drain the motivation of your Peer. Having a goal without a time frame, there is a risk that your Peer feels that it is not progressing, postponing things to the future, and a feeling of failure / mistrust can appear when they realize that nothing has happened. If it is a large goal, you can instead break down the goal into smaller time frames, which are then placed in a larger time frame. Think like an act in a play or periods in a football match, which in turn is placed in a tour or league game.



## TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH GOALS

Working with goals involves a wide range, from mapping a current situation to defining a desired situation. Add to that the journey towards the goal, with follow-up and reconciliation of how the goal fulfillment progresses. In this part you get tools that you can mainly use after you get to know your Peer, you have identified needs and start working on goals.



### PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

For example, if the goal is to swim for an hour every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. Which swimming pools are open? Can you swim several styles of swimming or is a course in swimming needed before you can start?

In the event of an obstacle, is there any activity that can replace swimming if necessary?

Talk about the goal and go over the conditions and what is needed for practical implementation.



### OVERCOMING BARRIERS

If, as a Supporter/Mentor, you pressure or push towards someone moving forward or making a change, this will often be met with resistance or barriers, especially if your Peer isn't really invested in doing this.

The barriers a Peer can put up can take on many different forms; this can come from having anxieties and worries around their status, living with HIV, medication and other aspects of living with HIV. To support someone to overcome and manage these it can be about approaching these without making judgements, and to be sure that you recognise this response is a signal to you to change your approach and that they have a different window of the world to you. You can use simple reflections, reframing as well as ensuring you emphasize that the Peer has a choice around moving forward.



### REFRAMING

Reframing is about supporting the Peer to maybe consider an alternative frame of reference; this is a subtle challenge of the persons beliefs or 'frame'. You can select words, actions and elements of someone's speech and either highlight or down-play these to create a different frame of reference. This can be used to switch a problem into an opportunity or an impossibility into a distant possibility, and potentially then onto a near possibility. It can also be used to reframe unkindness as potentially a lack of understanding. Practice with these examples!

"No one is ever going to love me because of what I have"

"I'm never going to get a job, I can't think of any reason why someone would give me a job."

## CONFIDENCE LEVEL - HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU TO ACHIEVE THIS?

If a person's confidence is below 7 on a scale of 0 - 10, the evidence suggests they are less likely to achieve their goal. If this is the case we should then work with them to try to increase the confidence level. This could be identifying what obstacles they foresee and working to overcome these barriers using your MI techniques. These can also be used if someone has not achieved their action plan.

NB. Some people may give you a confidence level of 10. Whilst this is great it can sometimes set people up for failure or they are not really setting themselves a challenge i.e. if someone already swims four times a week adding another day and giving themselves a confidence level of 10 is not really a challenge. So this is an opportunity to review the goal they have set themselves. Generally speaking a level around 7-8 is good rule of thumb for most people.

## TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH GOALS



### THE PENDULUM

The pendulum aims, like reframing, to contribute with new perspectives. The difference with reframing is that the pendulum is based on three steps. The pendulum is a simple but effective tool that can change views and break locked positions. As example:

1. Your Peer expresses an extreme attitude in an issue, such as "I do not want to tell others about my HIV and I will never find a partner."
2. As a Peer Mentor, you think the opposite. "I want to tell others, and I will find a partner"
3. As a Peer Mentor, you find an intermediate position and express it back to your Peer. "It sounds like you do not want to tell others right now, but there may come a time when it feels right and someone appears in your life."

The tool opens up for small mental shifts that in turn can make it easier for your Peer to see other perspectives.



### SELF-TALK

Self-talk is related to your own thoughts and ideas, and goes on more or less automatically all the time. What you say to yourself affects how you view both yourself and others.

To become aware and get a self-talk that gives you positive thoughts and energy, there is a simple process to follow:

1. Pay attention and take notice when negative thoughts arise
2. Change your thought to something positive and supportive
3. Repeat the positive thoughts in thought or speech
4. Act, for example dare to do / say it in reality
5. Be patient, over time the process becomes more routine and you can stop negative thoughts, which do not help you, as soon as they arise

A tip for successful self-talk is to do it straight away. If you find yourself having an excessively negative view of yourself, your ability or a situation, talk yourself up here and there, do not wait.

Another piece of advice is to keep the conversation short, think of short sentences or expressions that feel positive, supportive and forward thinking. Self-talk is largely about believing in yourself, believing that you are capable, sufficient and can achieve what you set your mind to.

If you have not practiced self-talk before, it is usually easier to start with something new, in a new situation. For example, if you want to learn something, you are about to move, start a new job, meet a new person and so on. You focus forward with a new mindset but it's a little nerve racking, then self-talk is a good tool.

# 🔧 “GO OR NO GO” ANALYSIS

To help you make the right decision, you can use the Go or No Go tool. The analysis clarifies the pros and cons of going forward or stopping. Examples of when the analysis can be helpful are:

Disclosing about my HIV for person x, take that course or move to a new home and so on.

My example of a question: \_\_\_\_\_

	PROS	CONS
GO		
NO-GO		

# ✍️ EXERCISE!

## ACTION PLAN

Write down your goal, based on the “How is the situation” exercise. Then with the help from an exercise partner, map out an action plan and, when needed, formulate the goal as a SMART goal. Take turns in the role of Peer Mentor and Peer.

### My goal

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### My action plan

- Answer the following questions in your action plan: What should you do? How are you going to do that? Where? When and / or how often? Is anyone else involved, if so how?

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How confident am I in succeeding on a scale of 1 to 10?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

\_\_\_\_\_

# FEEDBACK ACTION PLAN

In the top part, reflect on creating an action plan exercise, and ask your exercise partner for feedback. Think about tools, conversation techniques, communication and the other exercises we have gone through so far and how it was used in the exercise. In the bottom part, self-reflect over part 3.

Action plan: What did you do well?

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Action plan: What could you develop further?

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Action plan: Feedback from your Peer, how did the exercise go? How did you act in the role of Peer Mentor?

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## SELF REFLECTION PART 3

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# ENDING THE PEER-MENTOR-PEER RELATIONSHIP



There are several reasons why a Peer Mentor - Peer relationship ends. Maybe the goals have been met, your Peer found his partner, told his family and is now in a situation where they want to move on themselves. In such cases, the Peer Mentor-Peer relationship has fulfilled its function, but you can of course still be friends and keep in touch!

A termination may also be due to the exchange not giving your Peer anything. Your methods and tools may not be right right now - for that particular person. It may also be that you are not a good match, then perhaps in consensus you come to the conclusion that it is better to seek other solutions.

Regardless of the reason why the relationship ends, the termination is important. Both you and your Peer need to discuss and talk about this.

You need to go through what you have done so far. When did you start talking? What problems, questions or thoughts did you discuss? Did you set a goal and what did it look like?

By looking back, and following the Peer Support process, you can both learn what did not work or could have been done differently. It provides perspective on the collaboration and valuable feedback for both of you. You also need to start from what happens next, what should / does your Peer do now?

If you still find the collaboration reasonably ok, you can together make an exit plan, a short action plan that helps your Peer move forward.

If the collaboration has worked well but has recently stalled, you can instead take a break. Clear your mind and meet after a break. Your Peer may want to reflect themselves or test other possibilities before you pick up the plug again.

## EVALUATE YOUR OWN EFFORT

To develop in your role as a Peer Mentor, also evaluate and reflect on your own efforts in connection with an ending. Examples of questions that are suitable to discuss:

- What tools and methods have I used? How did I manage to work with them practically?
- How was the Peer process? (Get to know each other, talk and search for purpose, set goals, etc.)
- Discuss with other Peer Mentors to air your thoughts and get input from elsewhere
- Review your material and refresh your memory before the next Peer meeting

**NOTES**

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