

REAL LIFE STORY 3

No matter who you are, you can make a difference!

I am Winnie Nansumba. I am 19 years old. I am from Uganda.

I am HIV- positive.



I was raised in a family of four, my father, mother and sister. Unfortunately, they all died of AIDS. When I was in kindergarten my father died. My mother was very sick by then, but she had to work very hard to take care of me. A year after my father died, my mother died as well. Life became very hard for me. I was taken to live with my grandparents, where I have lived ever since.

When I was 12 I developed pneumonia. The pneumonia affected my immune system very badly. My HIV-status progressed into the most advanced stage of the disease: AIDS. I developed skin rashes and got very sick. This is how my fellow students discovered I was infected with HIV. It was a very bad time in school, because my fellow students started stigmatizing me.

This was the time I started using ARVs. The ARVs did not cure my HIV-infection, but taking the drugs improved my health. I could go back to the life I was living, I could go to school again.

I lived with my two cousins as well. They told me that the whole village knew that I was HIV-positive. My two cousins said, because I am HIV-positive, I could never get a boyfriend and I was going to die of HIV. Whenever they told me, I started to cry and lost hope that I would be able to move on. I wanted to go where my parents are, and be with them again. I didn't want to live anymore, and by that time I deliberately stopped taking my ARVs.

Then I went to a counsellor. The counsellor helped me to understand my life. She gave me back my focus in life and I started to take my drugs again.

From that moment on, I do not have so much self pity anymore. After counselling sessions I contacted an organisation that works with children living with HIV/ AIDS.



Through them I got involved in workshops about sexual and reproductive health and rights. I helped develop a curriculum about sexual health for young positives. In this workshop I learned that I had a talent in presenting. I wanted to become a rolemodel for young positives. I wanted to share my HIV-status with people through my presentations.



Now I have done a lot of presentations and shared my story of how teachers react to children living with HIV/ AIDS. Also I told people about my HIV-status in public.

Now I am a counselling student at the University. After I graduate I want to start an orphanage for young people living with HIV/ AIDS.

Also, I want all the communities to know that young people living with HIV/AIDS are normal people! They too have the right to love and be loved, they need care instead of pity, they need support instead of sympathy and should be free from stigma and discrimination.

My message to all the young positives out there is:

- ✓ No matter who you are, you can become an important person in this world.
- ✓ You should have self awareness, and you have to believe in who you are!
- ✓ You should fight for your future dreams and show the world you can make a difference!



Love Winnie