A woman with dark hair, wearing a green sari with a gold border and a gold necklace, is walking on a gravel path. She is carrying a blue bag over her shoulder and holding a white envelope and a black object in her hands. The background is a green wall and some foliage.

A day in
the life of an
HIV Positive
person

POSITIVE LIVING

facing. coping. surviving.





POSITIVE LIVING

A day in the
life of an
HIV Positive
person

04

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foreword

HIV/AIDS is a public health issue which has demanded worldwide attention. The AIDS Prevention and Control (APAC) Project, in partnership with NACO, TANSACS and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, has worked towards combating this global catastrophe for the last 15 years.

In the last decade and a half, APAC has carved a niche for itself in the field of HIV/AIDS management, thanks to the innovative approaches it has adopted. Among other things, APAC encourages People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) not only to lead a complete and self-reliant life, but also become role models to others.

This book is an attempt to capture one day in the life of one such role model. Our fond hope is that this document will serve as an example to many others, who are HIV positive. This book can be used as a guide by any PLHIV to understand the basic practices one should adhere to, in order to live a healthy and complete life. This book has been envisaged as a picture album depicting the life of a PLHIV in a realistic setting. This will be of help to both literate and illiterate PLHIV.

Our thanks to TANSACS, TSU, DAPCU, ICTC team and the NGO team members, who motivate the PLHIV to walk the path of self-reliance and positive living. Our thanks to Ms Asma, Consultant for spending the day with Ms Vijaylakshmi and documenting her activities during the course of the day. Our thanks to Ms Vijaylakshmi, who was willing to let us have an insight into her daily life.

My thanks to Dr T. Ilanchezhian, Director Program Operations, APAC for this innovative concept of bringing out one day in the life of a PLHIV, as a model document. This book can be used as a communication tool in the ART Centre and DICs to educate the PLHIV.

Dr Bimal Charles,

Project Director,

APAC-VHS





I am M Vijaylakshmi. I am around 33 years old. This is my story.

I was married when I was around 17 years, to a civil engineer. I had just completed my 10th standard. My son Mukesh Vijayraghavan was born when I was 19. He is 13 now.

In 2003, my husband fell ill and the tests showed that he was HIV positive. I was also tested for the virus and was found to have HIV too. My husband died the same year.

But I decided that I had to live, for the sake of my child and for my own sake. I found out all that I could about HIV and decided to live my life in a manner which would ensure my well-being and the well-being of my family, which consists of me, my son and my mother. Both my mother and my son are aware of my HIV positive status and are active care-givers.

This booklet is an attempt to tell people what a typical day in the life of an HIV positive person would be like. I am extremely happy to offer an insight into my day and hope that this book will be useful to other PLHIV, in their attempt to lead a healthy life.

Thanks

Vijaylakshmi M



07

06:00



My day begins at 6 am. I sleep on a clean bed, in a well-ventilated room and wake up to a new day. I am ready to greet each morning with confidence and hope.



06:05



The first thing I do is brush my teeth. Oral hygiene is extremely important to protect oneself from various infections including oral candidiasis.



06:07



My son and I often use the same towel to wipe our faces. This is because I know that HIV does not spread through sharing clothes, towels, plates and utensils.



06:15



A cup of coffee from my mother's hand is a great starter for the entire day. Once I have my coffee, I am ready to start my day.



06:30



I make sure that my son has a bath everyday. As a mother it is my responsibility to see that my son develops hygienic habits.



06:45



It is time for bath. A daily bath helps in keeping me healthy and free from opportunistic infections.



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07:00



Putting a kolam in front of my house gives me immense joy. It also brings good fortune and prosperity into our lives.



07:10



I water the plants everyday. Gardening is a hobby that gives me pleasure and exercise. However, I take care to see that I do not injure myself while gardening.



07:30



I wash my clothes everyday. Hygiene and cleanliness are the key to good health and a simple way of avoiding infections.



07:45



I help my mother with making breakfast. Fresh vegetables and greens are a part of my daily diet.



08:00



I eat freshly cooked food each day. While cooking my meals, I make sure that I use a clean vessel and clean water.



08:10



I make sure my family eats in a clean place. Cleanliness is indeed next to Godliness. I also make use of this time to motivate my son to brush up his lessons.



08:15



Washing hands with soap. This is one essential practice I follow before and after every meal.



08:17



A wholesome breakfast is a good way to start the day.



08:30



I take anti-retroviral medication for HIV. My mother makes sure that I have my morning medication at 8.30 am without fail.



08:45



I take pride in my appearance. Having HIV doesn't mean that I should give up on my life and appearance.



08:50



As a mother it is my responsibility to get my son ready for school in time.



08:55



I help Mukesh pack his bag for school. I make sure he has all his school books
in order.



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09:00



Mukesh leaves for school. I am a proud mother whose son is doing well in school.



09:10



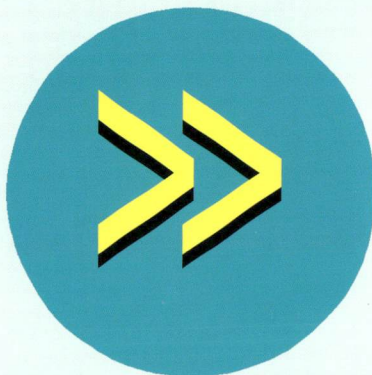
I also prepare to leave for work. I make sure that I wear sensible footwear to protect my feet from any kind of cuts or injuries.



09:15



...And I am on my way to meet another new day. I am confident I can handle whatever the day brings.



Taking care of my health is an important aspect of living with HIV. I do not hesitate to visit the Integrated Testing and Counseling Centre regularly and speak to the counselor to clarify my doubts. I also visit the doctor for a periodic check-up. I check my CD-4 count every three months to know the progress of the infection in my body.



நம்பிக்கை மையம் உங்கள் ஆத்ம நண்பன்



Integrated **C**ounseling and **T**esting **C**entre



ICTC is the first step to knowing one's HIV status and also the first step towards empowering oneself to live a positive life after the HIV infection.



A meeting with the counselor to learn more about positive prevention. This is valuable information which I can share with others.



The doctor checks my BP and also gives me tips on living a healthy life. This visit to the doctor is an essential part of my healthcare program.



The ART counselor speaks to me about drug adherence. I also use this opportunity to clarify my doubts about the side-effects of taking ART.



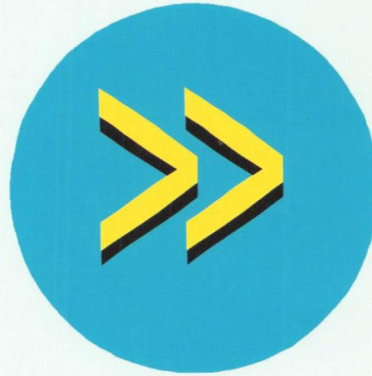
I make sure that I collect my medicines every month. I know that missing even one dose can prove dangerous, as it will make the virus resistant to medication.



Once every three months, I take the CD-4 count test. This helps me know the progress of the infection. This knowledge helps me take better care of myself.



I try to get as much information about HIV as possible. Information is one way of protecting oneself from the HIV infection.



A regular job helps me take my mind off unnecessary worry. My work gives my life a purpose and I hope to be a role-model for other people living with HIV. I also attend support group meetings with other HIV positive people, learn from them and also help out in times of need.



10:00



At my desk.





11:00



I am a good worker and very popular with my seniors and colleagues. Having HIV is not an obstacle to being good at your job.



1:00



I make sure to have my lunch everyday. I bring both food and clean water from home and eat it in a clean place.



02:00



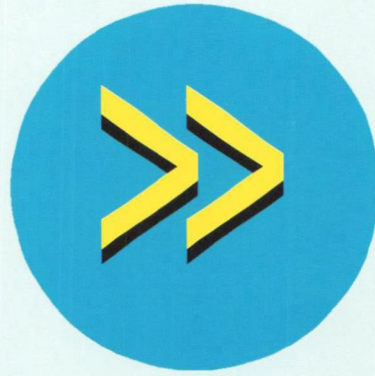
I regularly attend support group meetings of People Living with HIV/AIDS. I clarify my doubts and also try to help others in times of crisis.



03:00



A little rest when I am tired, helps me go through the day without any trouble. I use the Drop-In Centre for the purpose.



A visit to the Community Care Center is an important part of my healthcare program. I visit the centre every fortnight. I get a general check-up done at the centre and also collect my regular supply of vitamins.

சமுதாய நல மையம் COMMUNITY CARE CENTRE



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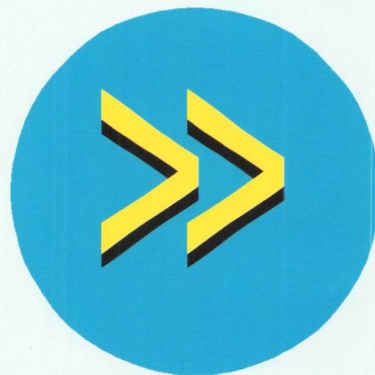
The Community Care Center at Trichy.



I get a check-up done each time I am there. This takes only a few minutes, is free of cost and puts my mind at rest.



I collect my regular supply of vitamins and other supplements, which help to maintain my immunity and protect me from any opportunistic infection.



Each evening I go back to a loving home. The fact that my family members are aware of my HIV positive status and stand by me, helps in maintaining my peace of mind. My mother and my son make my homecoming, each evening, a very happy occasion. They know that HIV doesn't spread through living in the same family, sharing food and clothes.



05:30



As soon as I come home from outside, I wash my feet. This is an important part of my cleanliness routine.



05:35



The drinking water in my house is boiled and kept in a clean vessel. It is always covered. No matter how thirsty I am, I only drink this water.



05:45



As soon as I come home, I change into clean home clothes. Wearing clean clothes is one way of maintaining good health.



06:00



Spending time with my son, gives me a lot of happiness. Mukesh is both my care provider as well as my playmate.



06:30



It is my responsibility as a mother to see that my son does well in his studies. I devote some time each evening to help Mukesh with his homework.



07:00



Well finished homework gets a much deserved kiss from the mother.

.....



07:15



Some family time. My family spends quality time together discussing the day or watching TV. This helps us become a united force in our fight against HIV.



07:30



Green and leafy vegetables are a part of my daily diet. My mother and I use the time we prepare dinner to catch up on the day's events.



08:00



Dinner time. This time I serve food to my mother like a good daughter should. HIV is not transmitted through making, serving, sharing and eating food from the same plate.



08:30



Mukesh gives me my ART medication every night. He, along with my mother, is my care provider.



09:00



A glass of milk and a fruit from my mother's hand. This not only helps me stay healthy, but also makes me feel well-cared for.



9:30



Some time for meditation before sleeping. A calm mind helps me sleep well at night.

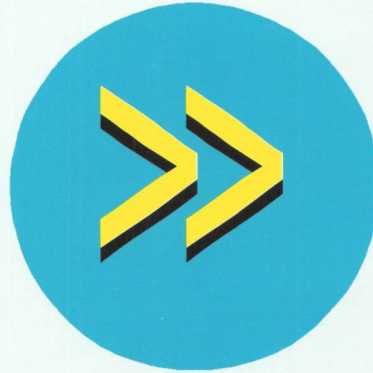


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10:00



And then it is time to call it a day. I change into a clean nightdress, and sleep on a clean bed. A good night's rest helps me wake up to a new day tomorrow.



I am also a member of the community. I interact with several people during the course of my day. Spending time with people keeps me free from unnecessary tension and depression. Gardening is my hobby and I also keep a pet. Both these activities help me spend my time usefully.



I have a pet goat and I sometimes take it out for grazing. It is alright to keep pets if we take care to wash our hands after handling them.



I share my joys and sorrows with my close friend. With her, I am able to confide in things that bother me and seek solutions to problems.



Once a month, I shop for groceries for the house. This chore, though time-consuming is very enjoyable. I make it a point buy healthy food for my family.



Some evenings, I manage the petty shop which I have opened in front of my house. It keeps me occupied as well as brings me some income.



Fresh vegetables are a part of my daily diet. I buy vegetables every other day, while returning home from office.



I spend time with my neighbours gossiping about various things. We share jokes, stories and also our joys and sorrows.

Do

- ✓ Establish a daily routine and maintain it.
- ✓ Maintaining hygiene is necessary for good health.
- ✓ A regular medical check-up should be a part of your health routine.
- ✓ Exercise goes a long way.
- ✓ Always use condom during sex, irrespective of your partner's HIV status.

Don't

- ✗ Don't take your illness lightly.
- ✗ Don't miss even a single dose of medication.
- ✗ Avoid unhealthy eating habits. Always eat freshly cooked food.
- ✗ Don't be careless while using knives and other sharp instruments.
- ✗ Avoid smoking or drinking alcohol.

Tips for the care providers

- ◆ Be proactive in your care giving. Don't be casual.
- ◆ Don't pity people with HIV or treat them like a burden.
- ◆ Treat the person with respect and love. He/she is only ill.
- ◆ Encourage the person to face challenges. Never discourage them.
- ◆ Never take their fears lightly. Motivate them to seek help.

...Finally, the last few words.

When I found out that I was infected with HIV, I was scared and confused. But thanks to the intervention by the NGOs I have begun to understand the infection in my body. I know that maintaining a healthy life style prevents opportunistic infections, which are a drain on my physical, as well as financial health.

The practices that I have evolved over a period of time have made me fit and my life productive. Today, I am able to work and live like any other HIV negative person. Like I have said before, a little care goes a long way.

Thanks





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