

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson title:

Stories of AIDS

Grade level:

9-12

Subject Area:

Health, Biology

Duration:

One or two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Examine the physical effects of AIDS
2. Study the plight of people living with AIDS and the effects on their families and friends

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Paper and pencil
- Index cards
- Bulletin board

Procedures:

1. Ask students to share what they know about AIDS. What causes it? What exactly does it do to the body? Review the basic definition of AIDS and its physical effects on the human body:
 - AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is the final, life-threatening stage of infection from the virus known as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).
 - HIV is the virus that causes AIDS; it severely damages the immune system and leaves the body unable to fight disease. (You may want to note that a positive HIV test result does not mean that a person has AIDS.)
 - There are three stages of HIV infection:
 - a. When a person is first infected with HIV, he or she may get flulike symptoms that usually go away without treatment.
 - b. Actual symptoms of an HIV infection may not appear for 2 to 15 years. These symptoms include tiredness, enlarged lymph glands, yeast infections, skin rashes, and dental disease. This stage may last from a few months to many years.

- c. AIDS is the final stage, in which the immune system is weakened to the point that it has difficulty fighting off certain infections. Such infections are known as “opportunistic” infections because they take advantage of the weakened immune system to cause illness. Although they are usually controlled by a healthy immune system, they can cause serious problems or may become life-threatening for people with AIDS. Common symptoms of people with AIDS include enlarged lymph glands, tiredness, fever, loss of appetite and weight, diarrhea, a general decline in health, and, in some cases, death. The virus can also infect the brain and the rest of the central nervous system, causing problems in thinking, memory, movement, and coordination.

For more information on HIV/AIDS, see the following Web sites:

CDC HIV/AIDS Resources

<<http://www.cdcnpin.org/hiv/>>

AIDS Handbook (Written for Middle School Kids, by Middle School Kids)

<<http://www.westnet.com/~rickd/AIDS/AIDS1.html>>

2. Ask the class to imagine what it's like to live with AIDS. What do they think are the challenges, fears, and day-to-day repercussions? Responses might include fear of dying, fear of being alone, anger toward themselves or their partners, embarrassment, frustration, sadness and depression, and exhaustion.
3. Tell students that they are going to read accounts written by people with AIDS or their families and friends. The following Web sites provide stories from men and women of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds:

<<http://gbgm-umc.org/cam/stories.html>>

<<http://www.hivaids.webcentral.com.au/text/stories.html>>

<<http://www.journale.com/aidsdecade/menu.html>>

4. Have students peruse the different stories and choose one to read in detail. As they read, have them take notes, considering the following questions:
 - How did this person contract AIDS? How old was he or she?
 - What type of treatment did this person receive? What was it like to receive this treatment?
 - How was this person's day-to-day life changed?
 - What were some of the predominant feelings this person dealt with? Did they change as the condition worsened?
 - How did friends and family influence this person's experience?
 - What services or people in the community helped this person?

5. In addition to taking notes, have students choose one quote from the story that is particularly telling, moving, enlightening, or surprising. They should write this quote on an index card, followed by the person's name, age, date of death (if they are no longer living), and any other important facts. Have students read these quotes out loud to the class and pin them to a bulletin board titled "Voices of AIDS."
6. As a final assignment, ask students to use their notes and the quote they selected to write a personal reaction to the story. They could write a journal entry, a mock letter to the person, or a letter to someone they know living with AIDS.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were some of the differences in how people coped with living with AIDS? What were some of the similarities among them?
2. From what you read and heard in class, what are some of the greatest challenges faced by people living with AIDS?
3. Consider five things a community could do to prevent the spread of AIDS.
4. What are some of the common symptoms of AIDS? Why are some of the more common conditions so dangerous to people with AIDS?
5. Examine some of the treatments available to people with AIDS. What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of different treatments?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students participate in class discussions on sensitive topics, complete the writing assignment, and demonstrate a basic understanding of the effects of AIDS on the human body:

Three points: participated actively in class discussion, with maturity and insight; displayed strong writing skills, demonstrating serious consideration of the personal story; demonstrated strong understanding of the effects of AIDS on the human body.

Two points: participated in class discussion, with some maturity and insight; displayed average writing skills, demonstrating some thought and consideration of the personal story; demonstrated average understanding of the effects of AIDS on the human body.

One point: participated little in class discussion, with difficulty discussing sensitive topics; displayed weak writing, demonstrating little thought and consideration of the personal story; demonstrated weak understanding of the effects of AIDS on the human body.

Extension:

What If It Were You? Or Someone You Loved?

Ask students to imagine how their lives would change if they or someone they loved had AIDS. Have them write an imaginary journal entry of a day in their life. They may choose to write about the day they learned they, or their loved one, had AIDS, the first day of treatment, or the day they told someone else they had AIDS. Some students may be inspired to interview people in their own community who are living with AIDS.

Suggested Reading:

AIDS and HIV: Risky Business (Teen Issues series)

Daniel Jussim.

Enslow Publishers, 1997.

Written in a straightforward manner, this title presents a brief history of the AIDS virus and the symptoms of and treatments for the disease. It introduces readers to students with AIDS, describes AIDS prevention programs, and details ways for teens to stay HIV free. It includes steps to take if you are at risk for HIV as well as a short directory of AIDS hotlines.

HIV Infection: The Facts You Need to Know

Kenneth L. Packer.

Franklin Watts, 1998.

Intended as a reference guide for teens, this book is filled with information on HIV, from a short history of epidemics throughout history, to an explanation of what HIV is and how it is spread, to the search for a cure. The chapter on prevention talks about safe sex. One chapter is devoted to the true story of Yvette and how she became infected with HIV. Some photographs and illustrations add to the text.

Vocabulary:

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)

Definition: The final, life-threatening stage of infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Context: The first cases of AIDS in the United States were identified in 1981.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

Definition: A virus that severely damages the immune system by infecting and destroying certain white blood cells.

Context: A person who tests positive for HIV does not necessarily have AIDS.

immune system

Definition: The system that protects the body from foreign substances, cells, and tissues.

Context: When a person's immune system is damaged, he or she cannot fight disease as effectively as someone with a healthy immune system.

Academic Standards:

The following standards are from the American Association for Health Education for students in grades six through eight:

1. Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

This lesson plan adheres to the standards set forth in the *National Science Education Standards*, in particular the category Science in Personal and Social Perspectives.

Credit: Joy Brewster, freelance writer and editor of educational material.

This lesson was developed in consultation with Nancy Hudson, health education consultant.

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