

# What can I do as a parent?

**Q** Dear Doctor,  
My daughter who  
was born with  
HIV and has been on  
ARVs almost all her life  
is now 23 years old.  
Because of the good  
care and adherence to  
her medicine, no one  
can guess she is living  
with the virus. What is  
bothering me is that she  
has moved in with a young  
man whom she told me is  
HIV negative. She says he  
knows she is HIV positive  
and does not mind, but  
he does not want his  
parents to know about it.  
She says he supports her  
to continue taking her  
medicine. When I told her  
what she was doing was  
wrong, she told me off;  
insisting they are adults.  
What does one do as a  
parent in such a case?

Florence

**A** Dear Florence,  
With the efficacy of  
ARVs, improved care  
for people living with HIV  
and better coverage of both  
health and treatment literacy;  
many people now understand  
that one having HIV does not  
mean he or she is going to  
die or infect his or her sexual  
partner with the virus like it

## DOCTOR WATITI

### TOWARDS ZERO

was in the pre-ART era.

ARVs have thus gone a long way in eroding the stigma associated with HIV. Therefore, instead of discouraging people with discordant HIV results from relating with each other, they should be supported to seek couple counseling, so that they make informed decisions. This seems to be the case with your daughter and her partner, if indeed she has disclosed her HIV status to him as she told you.

Your role as a parent and a person living with HIV yourself is to offer parental and peer support, so that the young people can live positively with HIV in their nascent family; and work

together to prevent new HIV infections and AIDS related deaths for your daughter and others who are already infected.

Concerning disclosure to others including parents, religious leaders or any other person, it should be one's choice. This is because disclosure should be for a purpose; either to prevent possible onward transmission of the virus to others or when one discloses in order to get support. Some people do

public disclosure to "give HIV a face" as a way of fighting stigma; but again, it should be voluntary and no one should be under pressure to disclose his or her HIV status for the sake of disclosure without a purpose.

