

YOUR CHOICE YOUR VOICE

Written by youth for youth

HATRED KILLS YOU INSIDE, BIT BY BIT

Biological parents are very important to a child. But what if they don't care about their children? I ask this question because I know who my father is, and he knows me. But the problem is, he has never wanted me. When I was a toddler my mother tried to get me closer to him so that I could get his love, instead he ran away.

When I got older my hatred for my father affected me a lot. My school performance was bad and I bullied those who had less power than me. I was just a naughty kid whose life was upside down because of hatred.

Two thousand and two was the worst year of my life. I was 14 years old and I wanted to see my father. I could not sleep. My relationship with my mother was poor because I did not respect her. I told my stepfather things that were not good, especially in his own house. I banged doors when I closed them and I was very violent. I still don't know how I passed grade 7, maybe the teachers were tired of me, and they wanted me to get out of their faces.

In December 2003, I told my mother that I wanted to see my father and she agreed. I had last seen my father when I was very young. My mother had his number so she phoned him and he refused however I forced my way.

When I got there, I could not believe my eyes. He had a beach flat that was just 15 minutes walk from the beach. He also had a family. I slept on the couch, in my own father's house. It seemed like I was not welcome. I asked if I could stay with him but he refused, and this made me so angry. When the time came for me to leave, he never bought me anything; he only gave me R300, excluding my transport fee.

Since then I have never seen my dad again. It tortured me inside. In 2006, I joined the Life Choices programme. I wanted to do something else that would make me forget about my dad, because I played cricket, but it did not make me forget about him. The sessions helped me a lot; the camps and the gathering also played a big role. I met other children from different backgrounds some of them came from a far better background than I do, but they were so humble.

Since joining the programme I have seen that it's useless to hate someone, because YOU will be only killing yourself. To those who don't live with both parents, maybe they died, be strong. Do not allow hatred to be a part of you because it will kill you inside, bit by bit.

By: Piwe Ncetezo, Age 19
Simunye Secondary School

T	V	E	O	N	U	R	S	E	S
E	M	C	V	I	R	U	S	D	S
S	I	N	S	P	I	R	E	D	R
M	U	E	F	S	D	R	E	A	M
O	P	R	I	F	T	R	C	F	B
K	E	R	I	A	Q	E	T	M	E
I	E	U	H	T	U	C	O	U	F
N	R	C	H	O	I	C	E	S	I
G	H	C	D	I	Z	O	S	I	L
S	T	O	R	Y	V	S	I	C	Y

Here are 15 words about this newsletter. Can you find them?

- LIFE
- CHOICES
- HATRED
- STORY
- OCCURRENCE
- HIV
- PRESSURE
- SMOKING
- DREAM
- MUSIC
- VIRUS
- SOCCER
- PEER
- QUIZ
- INSPIRED

By Leigh Raubenheimer, Age 15
Spes Bona High School

U.S AMBASSADOR VISITS LIFE CHOICES

Life Choices was pleased to host a visit from the U.S. ambassador, Eric Bost, at the Junior Peer Educators camp in July. He came and spent some time at the camp finding out more about Life Choices and the Peer Educators. He had a chance to walk around and meet some of the Peer Educators and observe them taking part in a variety of activities.

Ambassador Bost addressed the Peer Educators about his role as an ambassador giving them time to ask him any questions that were on their heart. Many topics were briefly covered. In the end, Ambassador Bost said to the Peer Educators that it does not matter if they forget everything he said but they should always remember two things.

Firstly, the importance of education. A good education will give you choices in life. If you aren't educated your choices are limited. It will be difficult for you to change where you live, what job you want and where you will go in life. But with education on your side you have many options.

Secondly, don't make mistakes that you can't fix. He gave the example of if you are caught with drugs and you are arrested and get a criminal record. This incident will stay with you for the rest of your life. There is nothing you can do to erase it. So don't make a mistake that will compromise the rest of your life.

The visit from the U.S. ambassador was short but he left an impression and food for thought.

By: Ruth Lundie, Age 28
Life Choices

SMOKING

I was 13 years old when I first lit a cigarette and dragged smoke deep into my lungs. Yes, I knew smoking could cause lung cancer. But I felt immortal and thought, "oh well, I've got my whole life to quit..." Then I started struggling to breathe. I had developed asthma because of my smoking and I was forced to go on steroids. Had I known as a child the high levels of carbon monoxide I inhaled from cigarettes could damage me so badly, I'd have kicked the butt much earlier! - Sorry Smoker, 19

This is a sad story, but it's one of the better ones. Cigarette smokers are linked to lung and other cancers, strokes, heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis, mental impairment, eye problems, headaches, premature aging... and the list goes on. Studies have also shown that smoking can trigger depression and other anxiety disorders in teens, as well as self-destructive behavior.

What's interesting is that 90% of adult smokers started before they were 16. So if you don't smoke in your teens, you probably never will. Thank goodness. But experts predict that 30-40% of the 2.3 billion children and teens worldwide will become smokers in early adulthood. And 250 million of these future smokers will be killed by smoking! Can you even imagine 250 million dead people? That's more than 5 times the whole population of South Africa!

Unfortunately most kids say at age of 10 that they'll never smoke, but by 12-13 they tried it because:

- Their friends are trying it
- They are curious
- They think they look cool
- They're surrounded by smokers like family members and friends

Don't fall into this trap!

- Smoking is personally and socially undesirable. It's rude, smelly, dirty, bad for your teeth, breath and skin. And bad for your health.
- Contrary to beliefs, tobacco is not good for stress reduction, weight loss or making friends. There are other (healthier) ways to do all of these things.
- Smoking takes away free choice and removes free will. Particularly when you want to quit. Do you really, want to loose control over a part of your life? Tobacco companies want you to see smoking as fashionable, sexy and fun. Why? Because they need new customers. So if you want to rebel against anyone, resist the lure of tobacco companies. They make tons of money by convincing you to smoke. And it's crazy to pay someone money to ruin your lungs, your heart and your life!

Remember: Tobacco kills when used as directed!

By: Monique Saib, Age 16
Voorbrug Secondary School

THIS IS NOT AN ISOLATED OCCURRENCE

The Life Choices programme came to Holy Cross in 2006. They ran sessions with different grades. Thereafter they held interviews with some grade 10's to become Peer Educators. Peers who would be leaders and be a representative of their class, grade, school and community.

These learners undertook training in all the areas of the Peer Education model i.e. HIV/AIDS, sexuality and lifestyle issues among others. Thereafter they would be able to educate and help their peers around their community and school.

Before any of the Peer Educators can go out into communities they are equipped in fulfilling the four roles of a peer educator:

1. Role modeling positive and healthy behavior,
2. Educating their peers in a structured way,

3. Recognizing peers with needs and referring them for help,
4. Advocating for change and uplifting the community,

Which our Peer Educators understand and try their best to fully adhere to.

Life Choices has made a huge impact on Holy Cross, the Peer Educators are educating their peers in life issues. Facilities like VCT (Voluntary Counselling and Testing) have been made available to the learners at the school. The Peer Educators mobilized their peers, so that their peers can have a clear understanding of what VCT is. This is only one of the many wondrous impacts Life Choices has had on Holy Cross.

All I hope is that all of this is not only an occurrence in my school but in many other schools. We, young people, need to be educated!

By: Tholakele Nyongo, Age 15
Holy Cross Convent High School

PEER PRESSURE TOO HARD TO HANDLE? WELL JUST CHEAT IT!

Children falling into the traps of substance abuse, crime, teenage pregnancy and many more could all be as a result of negative peer pressure. Peer pressure is one of the biggest contributors towards making the future of a child become dimmer and dimmer without them even realizing it.

I don't think that there's anybody who can honestly say that they have never been exposed to peer pressure. It affects all of us sometime in our lives but the big question is if you give into it or not.

I know that it is sometimes hard to deal with peer pressure but here's some interesting ways to make it somewhat easier.

Just say NO

If you are facing direct pressure to do something you don't want to do, be direct and say no. Try saying it to the ones you feel most comfortable with. Be confident, but try not to make them feel defensive.

Find creative excuses

I realize that some people may not feel comfortable saying no yet. The best option would then be to find a creative excuse. It's okay to use your parents as an excuse. For example, if you are out with friends who urge you to break your curfew, you could say that your parents threatened to ground you if you don't make it home on time.

Fake it for now

Sometimes it's okay to pretend to do things you don't want to do. This gives you time to think of a better way to deal with the pressure. For example, if you don't want to drink beer at a party you can dump the beer down the toilet and fill the can with water. This way no one will know you're not drinking alcohol. This works best as a temporary solution.

Make a joke

A joke can sometimes be a non-threatening way to ease the pressure. If your friends are pressuring you to do something you don't want to do you can make a joke, they would continue making jokes with you and forget about pressuring you. This doesn't always work but it's worth a try.

Talk with your parents

You may think that they don't understand what you're going through, but they've been teens too and have probably also been through peer pressure. You could ask them for advice on how to deal with it.

Well here are a few ways to cheat peer pressure so use them and get yourself out of something that could threaten your future because your future is much more important than being cool.

By: Shannon Malgas, Age 15
Voorbrug Secondary School

A DREAM COME TRUE

Well it started when I was in Grade 9, 2006. I was friends with Grade 10 learners who were part of the Peer Education Programme. Every afternoon after school I would go around and listen to what they as peer educators had to say about their experiences within Peer Education. They followed the programme halfway because they were complaining that they had duties to do at home. Then I had no more friends in Peer Education to get anymore information.

Finally I was in Grade 10, which was the gap for me. I attended the meetings once a week after school. The facilitators explained what was expected of a student starting out as a Peer Educator. We started by doing strategic chats with our peers, community resource visits, talk groups, assemblies as well as meetings with other peer educators from other schools. At first I was the only "coloured" Peer Educator, but this did not stop me from attending the meetings because I was used to being around Xhosa speaking learners. They were all quite nice which showed me that everyone can definitely get on well even if you are not from the same backgrounds, cultures, race and environment.

Some of what I have learned in the Peer Education Programme is that your values are the things that you believe in and no one else can put you down. Also that everyone is equal no matter who you are, we are the same.

My encouragement for all the learners who want to become Peer Educators is to go ahead, it is not a boring place to be. To be exact, it is really Entertaining, Powerful, and Encouraging, which I prefer to call as the E.P.E.. These are the three words that I always leave with after every session. So it is not that bad, yes you sit there for an hour after school, but hey you learn from it. Even if I ask questions, which I thought were stupid, when I get the answers to the questions it actually doesn't feel that stupid but the answers are interesting.

Learn to take care of small things, because it shows that you can take care of something and when the big things come, you will know how to take care of them. Learn to recognize the opportunity when it comes. Be like the bee and sting all your dreams.

By: Bronwyn Janse, Age 15
Simunye Secondary School

MUSIC REVIEW

A review of Avril Lavigne new CD – The Best Damn Thing

The CD consists of twelve new HOT tracks that will blow you away. If you are a BIG fan of Avril Lavigne you should go out and get it. What is very interesting about it, is that it has very unusual songs. Things you would never think Avril Lavigne would sing about.

You will enjoy it from the start until the end. It's that kind of CD you won't want to put it off, it will definitely be on repeat all day long. Her songs are very sophisticated, enjoyable, loud, relaxing and relate to everyday life. And boys don't think she's just for girls there are quite a lot of songs that guys would actually find cool.

If you don't know who she is, where have you been? She has been around for years. She has sung – *I'm with you, Complicated, Skater Boy* and so much more...

This is a MUST HAVE in your CD collection. I'm telling you; you won't regret it.

By: Leigh Raubenheimer, Age 15
Spes Bona High School

BE INSPIRED!!!

You are only an attitude away from success.
 Attitude follows action.
 Let them criticize you. Have perseverance.
 View failure as an opportunity to learn.
 Explore your potentials
 Explore your talents
 Explore your skills

Grasp information and give information concisely
 Be prepared to dream big and then test your limits.
 Don't put a lid on your potential.
 Dare to dream in spite of problems.
 Dream and then make your dreams a reality.
 Perceive where you want to be.

Be positive
 Be stimulated
 Be a leader
 Be a motivator
 Be a role model

Don't make life perplex for you
 Salvage your school, community and country
 Illuminate your future
 Be enthusiastic
 Be confident
 Be powerful
 Be inspired to inspire!!!

By: **Amanda Kotelana, age 16**
 Masibambisane High School

NO NEED TO EXPLAIN

There is no need to explain
 My identity
 My nationality
 And even my sexuality

There is no need for me being a hypocrite
 Hide, the inner me
 I am lesbian, homosexual, lesi, stabanekezazi
 The identity you choose for me
 Every move I make it hangs there
 For everyone to see

I thought having friends
 Is like having a sanctuary
 But its like a struggle
 In a jungle
 Expected of me to be humble
 Who I am
 Is what I am

No need for me to
 Impress and dress

You talk behind my back
 Confidence is what you lack
 You come to confront me with pride
 You expect me to abide
 But still I won't rise

Siren out of tune
 Pain that I gain
 That I earn
 A music that makes me sick
 A tunnel that I must tussle
 A dream without a theme

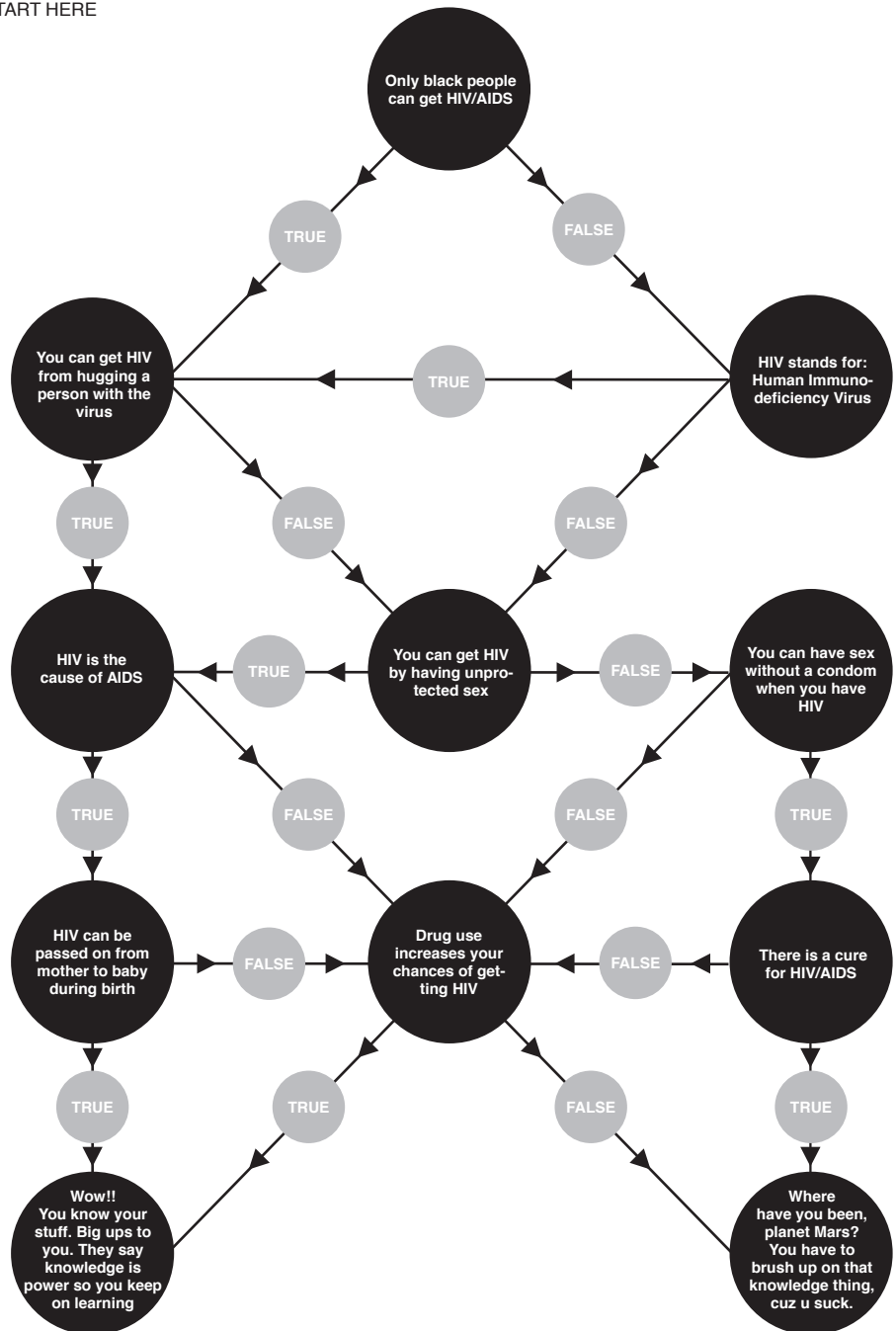
But still there is no need to
 Explain myself to you.

By: **Nosiphelo Mahola, Age 16,**
 Peak View Secondary School

DO YOU HAVE WHIZ TO ANSWER THIS QUIZ?

If your answer is yes, let's put your brains to the test!! DO YOU KNOW ALL YOUR HIV/AIDS FACTS?

START HERE



By: **Shandray Fester, Age 16,**
 Phoenix Secondary School

MY STORY

At the beginning of the year I lost one of my friends, which was also my fellow partner in peer education. She was everything to me that a person could ever ask for; we had a good friendship. When I had problems I always shared them with her and she would be the one that gave me solutions. She was my helper in mathematics because she was the one who understood it.

When the school closed we parted and I couldn't wait to see her. After the holidays I got the news that she had passed away, at first I couldn't believe that the only person who understood me and helped me wouldn't be there anymore. Everyday while sitting in class I would remember how she would come through that door with a smile on her face, coming towards

me just to share a joke. I was so hurt and kept asking myself why. Why Zukiswa the good hearted person? I always asked my mom why I think of her and she answered "it's because you haven't given yourself time to get over such a shock". Now I have to get used to the fact that she will no longer be there and that I will always cherish the memories that she has left behind.

In life things happen for a reason and it all depends on how you as a person act upon it. You will have to understand that people are on earth for a certain period of time and you should make use of the time that you have with them.

By: **Bomikazi Melane, Age 18**
 Simunye Secondary School

THERE IS MORE TO ME THAN THE VIRUS

I want to live - and refuse to do so in fear and self-pity, writes David Patient

Having lived with HIV for 23 years, I have learned the hard way that people attach all sorts of judgement to me for being infected. I have also learned that I have no control over what people think about me. No matter how hard I may try to please them, what goes on, in their heads is completely out of my control.

Like many others, I initially responded to this stigma by pretending I was not infected, keeping quiet when people spoke about HIV and Aids, and also refusing to get help when I needed it. One day I realised a few things that changed all this: I want to live, I deserve to live, and what other people think about me is none of my business. I have not tolerated stigma since, or let ignorant or judgemental comments towards me go unchallenged.

When I stopped seeing myself as a helpless, undeserving victim (self-stigma) other people stopped treating me like one. I learned that people treat me the way I teach them to treat me. I tolerated blame and shame for a long time. I secretly agreed with judgements of me. One day, after a brick was thrown through my window, my dogs had been poisoned, and I had been fired from my job for being HIV positive, I got angry: how dare they treat me this way.

I learned the hard way – that the opinions of people I valued were based upon fear, not wisdom, and certainly not compassion. I was being punished by myself – and therefore others – for accepting the lie that God loves me less than anyone else. I also had to accept that I am not powerless and never have been, even when I believed I was.

I am not an "Aids sufferer", or an "Aids victim", and anyone who says otherwise is going to hear from me.

I live with Aids. I am not my virus – I simply have the virus in my body. My mind, heart and soul are not infected, unless I let them be infected by beliefs in victimhood and fear. There is far more to me than my HIV status.

People are often shocked or puzzled when I say HIV is the most valuable teacher I have had in my life. It is true: it was HIV that was the trigger to taking my personal power back. I had unprotected sex. My body got infected with a virus. I now take care of my body as best I can. I am responsible for dealing with this. I also decide how I think and feel about myself. As far as I am concerned, external stigma starts with internal stigma, and I'm not about to tolerate either. I value my life and refuse to live in fear and self – pity.

Article from the Sunday Times, 11 June 2006

LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY BY ABSTAINING

Abstaining from sex is the only way that you will be sure that you will not get HIV or any other sexual transmitted infection. But practicing abstinence requires a strategy:

1 Be clear about why you want to wait

- List your reasons. Talk them over with someone who supports you.
- Check your list from time to time to remind yourself.

2 Have a plan

- Know what situations might make it hard to stick with your choice.
- Decide ahead of time what you'll do to avoid or deal with them, such as leaving the scene when being pressured to have sex.

3 Be impressed with yourself

- It can be hard to go against the crowd and make your own choices.
- Give yourself credit. You deserve it.

4 Notice the pressures

- Be aware of messages in music, videos, and movies telling you to have sex.

5 Get support

- Hang out with friends who know about and respect your decisions.
- Avoid people who might put pressure on you.
- If pressured, threaten to tell someone in authority (a relative, teacher, police).

6 Practice communication skills

- Learn to say "NO!" with confidence or "no, no, no" repeatedly.
- Give a reason such as "I'm not ready" or "I've decided to wait until I've achieved my academic goals".
- Turn the tables: "You say that if I love you I would, but if you really love me, you wouldn't insist".

Text from YouthNet

SOCCER STARS ON THE MOVE..

International Stars:

Va-Va Voom (Thierry Henry) Joins FC Barcelona

Thierry Henry, one of the most lethal international strikers ever to kick a football is set to join Barcelona. With the 2007/08 season about to commence, every club is on the look out for the best there is in the world. To my surprise the Spanish giants (FC Barcelona), are enlisting the services of Va-Va Voom, Thierry Henry, the former Arsenal striker (English Premier Club). Arriving in Barcelona at the Nou Camp, Henry was amazed about how big the club was. Henry has chosen the number 14 jersey at FC Barcelona and he will don the jersey that Johan Cruyff made famous.

In an exclusive interview with Barca TV and www.fcbarcelona.cat Henry spoke openly about his thoughts on being met by so many people at the Barca Stadium and said that it was an unforgettable day. Thierry Henry will be joining the likes of Samuel Eto, Lionel Messi, Ronaldinho, Deco etc. We will be waiting to see who will conquer the Spanish La Liga, after Real Madrid swept the trophy right from under their feet.

Local Stars:

Leremi moves to Downs

Over the past months there has been an outcry from the Orlando Pirates fans about the behaviour of certain players in the camp. Gift Leremi has been one of the players that has come through Pirates youth development structures and has been struggling with discipline issues off the field which has affected his on the field performance. Leremi has been, for a long time, without even playing, the Bhakhaniyas favourite. There were also rumours that he might be moving overseas until it hit the media that an agreement has been reached between Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates for Leremi to continue with his career in South Africa. The amount for the transfer is a whopping 3 Million Rands! Leremi (Continental known to fans) is a player of extreme potential and for the benefit and development of soccer in this country as we go to 2010, I hope that he flourishes at his new club.

By: Shadrack Kgosane, Age 24
Life Choices



Third Quarter 2007

LIFE CHOICES

310 Lansdowne Rodd,
Lansdowne, 7780
PO Box 14290, Kenwyn 7790

Tel/Fax: (021) 696 4187
Web: www.salesians.org.za
Email: salifechoices@gmail.com

Manenberg High, Phoenix High, Masibambisane High, Simunye High, Rosendaal High, Voorburg High, Leiden High, Athlone High, Ned Doman High, Rylands High, Spes Bona High, Peak View High, Holy Cross High and St. Joseph High.