



Should have taken the advice

He told me it would be fun,
He was wrong,
Why did I listen?
Should have stayed strong,
And said no.

‘Adero, we will be safe without a condom’, he told me.
Why did I listen?
He was wrong.

I needed the money
What could I do?
I’ve paid a great price;
Should have taken the advice.

Of course this has happened before,
But I got lucky
Those times.
Ignored the advice
This time,
And paid the price.

One of the sixty percent
Of newly infected
I’ve now become.
HIV/AIDS
That’s what’s happened.

I should have listened,
Taken the advice,
But didn’t think twice.

VCT – Voluntary Counselling and Testing
I ignored.
Felt embarrassed, ashamed
To get the advice
Even though the counsellor was nice.

I have the disease
Now it is, I feel embarrassed and ashamed
Because I didn’t listen to advice
Didn’t think twice.

Adero turns to her best friend Akili for advice. Akili has gone through a similar experience, and has had some lessons in school about sexual health and voluntary counselling and testing (VCT).

Adero: Akili you already know my mother died from AIDS. Why was I so careless?

Akili: My friend, sometimes we are not given enough information and help. This is not your fault. I can help you now. We can go to VCT and you can get more advice and help. They will test you for the disease. And you can talk to other young girls like you. You will see we're not alone.

Adero: He told me a condom would make sex less romantic. I wasn't even sure if I wanted to have sex with him.

Akili: Adero, if you are unsure you have the right to say no. But they told us at school that if you choose to have sex then using a condom doesn't have to be a chore. You can both help to put it on, and enjoy this time together – it adds to the romance/intimacy of sex. Most importantly, it keeps you both safe.

Adero: Really? But I'd be embarrassed to use them because then people will think I'm promiscuous.

Akili: I felt like that too. But the teacher told me that if you decide to have sex you should never feel embarrassed about using a condom or talking about them. Using a condom does not mean you are promiscuous. She said that it makes sex safe and means we stay healthy.

Adero: But Akili, doesn't using a condom mean you don't trust your partner?

Akili: If one of you has HIV/AIDS then using a condom shows that you care about your partner because you do not want them to get infected. Using a condom stops you from getting HIV/AIDS. The teacher told us that even if you do not have HIV/AIDS you should use a condom – it is a good habit to get into for all sexual activity. Because we are young women the way our cervix is developing means our risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) including HIV is really high, so it is very important for our health to always use a condom.

Adero: We shouldn't have had sex.

Akili: The teacher told us that is an even better way to keep us safe. If we wait to have sex...wait until we are ready. And then when we are ready, using a condom.

Adero: Well, it is too late for me this time, but at least if I decide to have sex in the future I will know how to keep safe. I feel embarrassed to ask, but aren't condoms unreliable?

Akili: It's ok don't feel embarrassed – I already told you. The teacher told us that they are very reliable. She told us that if you choose to have sex, use a condom, and you won't have to worry because you'll be safe and protecting each other from disease.. Condoms are very thin – you will not notice a difference.

Adero: But what if my partner does not want to use condoms?

Akili: They are probably scared because they do not know enough information about them. Tell them what I have told you. Tell them that it will ensure you are both sexually safe and will mean you can both relax. The teacher also said if you are experienced in using a condom then tell your partner why you like using them – you trust each other; talking about and using condoms is another way of showing your trust.

Akili: Adero, another very important lesson I learned from school was the safety of having one partner. The more partners we have, the more we put our health at risk. The teacher told us that if we stay faithful to one partner we will have a trusting, healthy relationship. We will be good examples for our children – they won't make the same mistakes as us.

Adero: (laughs) You are living up to your name aren't you – very wise. Thank you for all of your help Akili. I was really scared.

Akili: It's ok my friend. I was scared too when it happened to me. I will go with you to VCT – you will see there are many like you. There is help for you.

Adero: But what will happen to me now? I saw what happened to my mother. I'm scared the same will happen to me.

Akili: Please try not to worry Adero. Your mother didn't get any treatment. But you will be tested. Once we fully know your status then you can get treatment. The teacher said if you have the HIV infection or AIDS then there are drugs you can take. They can't cure the disease, but your life is much better if you take the drugs. We'll know more when we go to the counsellor.

