



Your Hive of
Whole Health

Hive Keeper:

a workbook to support
your whole health journey

Lizzie is living with HIV.



This resource was created with organizations and advocates who support the HIV community to help you on your whole health journey. This workbook was created with intention and care for **you**.

Your health touches every part of your life—

the things other people see and the things they don't. That's why a "whole health" approach to HIV care means looking at the big picture of you—your physical, emotional, and social health, as well as your basic needs.

Merck created Your Hive of Whole Health alongside an advisory council of community organizations and advocates to support people with HIV as they care for their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit. Our goal is to ensure the journey to whole person health doesn't happen alone—that's why we call it your "Hive." Because the best health outcomes can happen when you're surrounded by people who care.



Julian (pictured top), Honey (pictured middle), and Alejandro (pictured bottom) are living with HIV.

This workbook is yours.

You can use this workbook as:



A journal or a creative outlet



A guide for your next appointment



A way to track how you are feeling—physically, mentally, and emotionally



A way to think about connecting with your Hive—the people in your life who matter most

Keep it in a safe place, because it belongs to you.



We encourage you to use the workbook as a companion to HiveofWholeHealth.com.

A Whole-You Approach

In this workbook, we explore your whole health in four areas, which are all connected:



Actor portrayal of healthcare professional (pictured left); Lizzie (pictured right) is living with HIV.



Physical Health

This goes beyond staying or being undetectable. It includes knowing your “other numbers” like cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar.



James (pictured middle) is living with HIV.



Social Health

Your social health is about more than relationships. It’s about the quality of your connections—those with people, community, and purpose—and how vital they are for long-term wellness. This includes the people who help you feel whole, whether it’s a partner, family, friends, neighbors, community or religious leaders, or care team member, they are a part of your whole health journey.

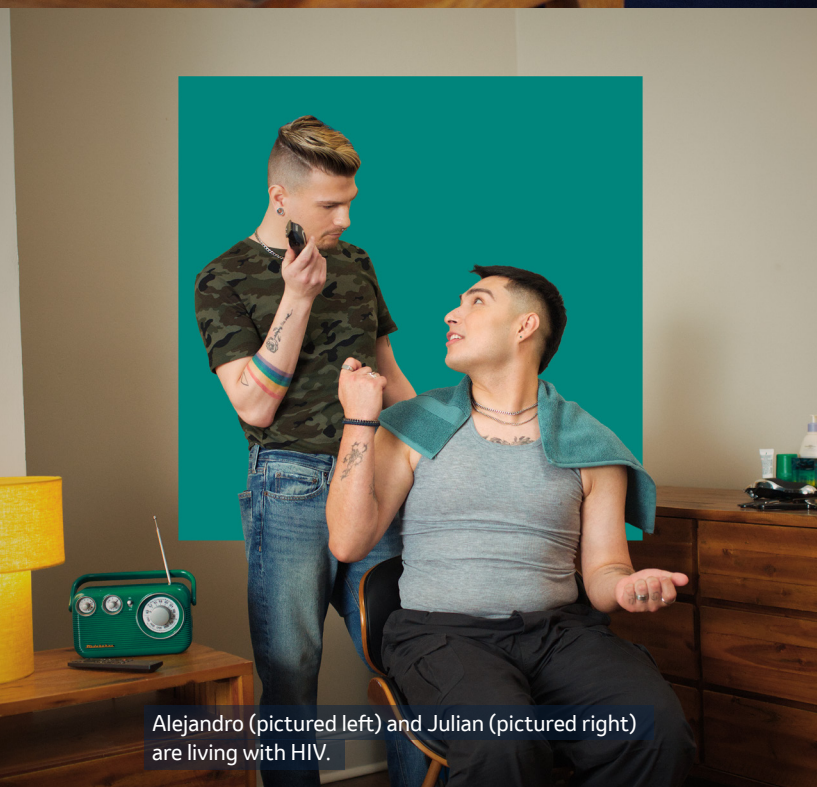


Leo (pictured left) is living with HIV.



Emotional Well-Being

This section provides information to support your emotional well-being, which can affect how you feel about yourself and the future.



Alejandro (pictured left) and Julian (pictured right) are living with HIV.



Basic Needs

Think about the things that support your day-to-day life, how you choose to make a living, and your access to care. Quality housing, economic mobility, and access to healthy food and health coverage can have a direct influence on your overall health.

“When considering people living with HIV and their diagnosis, it extends beyond the individual to include their care team and families.”

Leisha McKinley-Beach

MPH, Member of Your Hive of Whole Health Advisory Council



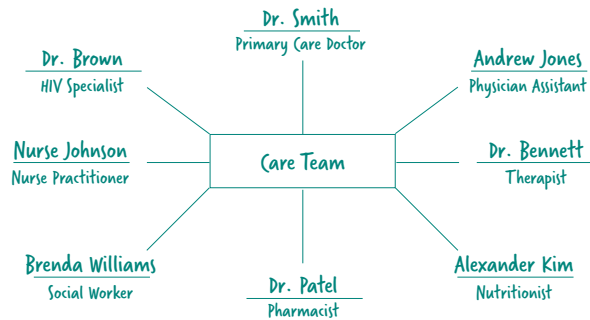
Lizzie (pictured right) is living with HIV.

Who's in Your Hive?

Use this page to write down the people in your Hive. Use stickers, markers, tape, or other art supplies to make these diagrams your own!

We will talk more about your Hive in this workbook, so you can refer back to this page throughout.

Here's an example of what your Hive may look like



Write in the names of people who are in your Hive. You can print more of these diagrams at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

Care Team

HIV care team and other healthcare providers

Personal Connections

Partner, family, friends, neighbors, and more

Community Support

Faith leaders, advocacy groups, mentors,
support groups, and more



Honey is living with HIV.

My Whole Health Pact

If it feels right, make a whole health pact or commitment with yourself and with someone in your Hive—your Hive partner. It's a simple way to set your intentions and invite the people who matter most to support you along the way.

Your Hive partner may be a friend, a sponsor, an accountability partner, or anyone who reminds you that you're supported.

Your pact with yourself:

I _____, commit to honoring my whole self, my basic needs, my body, my mind, my spirit, and my social circle. I will invite my Hive, including _____, to support my journey along the way.

I know this journey can be hard to navigate alone. My Hive partner, _____, is the person I can count on to walk alongside me.



Leo is living with HIV.

Physical Health

This section is about partnering with your care team to understand your full health picture—your numbers and other health conditions you may have. Your care team may include your HIV care team and other healthcare providers.

“We have to look at HIV not just as a disease process, but as a life process. When we view it through that lens, we start paying attention to the whole person—how I feel overall, how I feel existing in my body, how I feel moving in my body. Those are the things that I think matter and make me comfortable moving forward.”

Bridgette Picou

LVN, ACLPN, Member of Your Hive of Whole Health Advisory Council, The Well Project



Julian (pictured left) is living with HIV; Actor portrayal of healthcare professional (pictured right).

Questions to help you connect with your care team



These questions may help you have deeper conversations with your care team about your health. This can help members of your care team get to know you as a person.

Question	Why This Matters?
“We talk a lot about my HIV viral load. What other health considerations should I be tracking?”	Living well means making sure every part of your “engine” is running smoothly so you can keep doing what you love. For example, check in on your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar. Work with your care team to capture the full picture.
“I’ve noticed a shift in my [energy/mood/sleep]. How can we get me back to feeling my best?”	If something is dimming your spark, it’s worth talking about. Telling your care team how you feel matters as you continue to work together to develop the best care plan.
“I have a lot on my mind, but I don’t always remember to bring everything up. Can we build in some time at the end of our appointment so we can cover any last-minute topics?”	Time with your care team can fly by. Asking a question like this can open the door for you to talk about other key topics, not just your labs.
“What is the best way for me to contact you if I have a question between visits?”	Knowing how to reach your care team if you have questions in between routine visits can be helpful. Ask the question so you can feel supported every step of the way.

Other Important Areas of Whole Person Health

Learn about some common health conditions for you and your care team to talk about and keep track of. Scan the QR codes below or learn more at HiveofWholeHealth.com.



HIV

Learn the basics about HIV so you can focus beyond it.



Cholesterol

See how managing your cholesterol can play a role in living well with HIV.



Blood Sugar

Take a look at some ways that you can manage your blood sugar levels.



Bone Health

Strong bones are what let you keep up with your life—whether that's chasing pets or staying independent. Find ways to protect your bone health while living with HIV.



Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, can impact your overall health. Learn about ways to manage your blood pressure.



Kidney Health

Your kidneys work hard for you. Learn why keeping them working is important for your overall health.



Weight Health

You may be noticing changes in your weight, which can impact overall health. If so, you're not alone, and there are healthy habits that can help.



My Care Team

Your care team is bigger than you think. Pause to reflect, scroll your contacts, and make a list of those supporting your whole health journey. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

Provider Name	Role	Contact Information
Nikki J.	Social worker at the clinic	nikkij@clinic.com

Notes:

My Medication Routine

Consistency matters. It may be helpful to track your medicines, as prescribed by your care team. Consider using this grid to track your HIV medications, treatments for other conditions, as well as vitamins and supplements.

Build a routine that works for you and make sure you update this list for your visits with your care team. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

Medicine	Time of Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

Notes:

Know Your Numbers

Your care team keeps track of your health with different tests and exams, called health markers. The results of these tests are often written as numbers. You can use this tracker to record your numbers such as: HIV viral load, CD4 cell count (often called T-cell count), blood pressure, cholesterol levels, A1C (an average measure of blood sugar over the past 2-3 months), and weight.

Bring the tracker to your appointments, and talk to your care team about what these numbers may mean for your health. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

Health Marker:						
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Date:						
Date:						
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Date:						
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My Body, My Space

This page belongs to you and your body that carries you. Use this quiet space to connect your physical movement to your inner world.



Write, doodle, or thank your body for its grace, power, and generosity. Enjoy this moment of pure pause. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.



Lizzie is living with HIV.

Your emotional well-being shapes how you experience everything else: your relationships, your motivation, your sense of joy.

Emotional Well-Being

“If you want to live healthily, be in love, be happy, you can. Continue living and enjoying life! This [HIV] is nothing compared to what many of us have gone through—we’re strong!”

Tori Cooper

Member of Your Hive of Whole Health Advisory Council



Actor portrayal of healthcare professional (pictured left); James (pictured right) is living with HIV.

Questions to help you connect with your care team

Consider using these questions as a starting point for conversations with your care team about your emotional health.

Question	Why This Matters?
“I’ve been feeling [anxious/down/overwhelmed] lately. Can we talk about what this might mean?”	Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health. Naming how you feel is an important step toward getting the help you deserve.
“My labs look good, but mentally, I’ve been struggling.”	Living with HIV can carry invisible struggles—stigma, worry, and isolation. Your care team should be a safe space to unpack all of it.
“Where do people go when they want to connect with others for support? Are there peer support groups, local HIV community organizations, or any programs you recommend?”	See if your care team can help point you to other local resources in your community.

A Space for Me

This page belongs entirely to you. There are no prompts to answer, no rules to follow, and no right or wrong ways to fill it. Use this reflective space as a room to breathe, heal, and grow along your journey.



Whether you want to write down your thoughts, doodle, list things you are grateful for, or simply let out what is on your mind today—this space is yours. Take a deep breath, and enjoy this moment for yourself. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.



Additional doodle space:

My Self-Care Steps

Small acts of self-care can add up. Here are some ideas to prioritize your emotional health. Feel free to add your own ideas, too. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

☐	Step outside for fresh air
☐	Do something creative—draw, cook, sing, dance
☐	Write down or say one thing I'm grateful for
☐	Reach out to someone I trust
☐	Say no to something that drains me
☐	Move my body in a way that feels good
☐	Take 10 minutes of quiet time for myself
☐	Pause and ask myself, 'what do I need in this exact moment?'
☐	Try a gentle breathing exercise to quiet my mind and body
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My Emotional Wellness Check-In

Check in with your emotional state each day. There's no right or wrong answer—just notice and honor how you're feeling. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
							
							
							

This week, I'm feeling:

One thing that brought me joy this week:

One concern I am carrying that feels heavy:

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
							
							
							

This week, I'm feeling:

One thing that brought me joy this week:

One concern I am carrying that feels heavy:

Notes:

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
😊							
😞							
😞							

This week, I'm feeling: _____

One thing that brought me joy this week: _____

One concern I am carrying that feels heavy: _____

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
😊							
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😞							

This week, I'm feeling: _____

One thing that brought me joy this week: _____

One concern I am carrying that feels heavy: _____

Notes:



Someone I can reach out to when I need support: _____

If you're struggling, you don't have to do it alone. Talk to your care team or consider finding a local resource to support your emotional health. If you need immediate help, free, confidential support is available 24/7—call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org.



Julian is living with HIV.

Your social health is shaped by the connections you keep, the communities you belong to, and the courage it takes to let people in. This section is about strengthening your Hive and finding your voice in the relationships that matter most.

“To have an effective Hive, you need to have some really vulnerable conversations and you need to be able to set your boundaries. You need to be able to talk about what matters most to you and what you need.”

Sheila Tumilty

BSN, RN, ACRN, Member of Your Hive of Whole Health Advisory Council,
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care



Lizzie (pictured right) is living with HIV.

Tips for conversations about your status

Telling others about your HIV status is a choice, not an obligation. Your safety, peace, and dignity come first. This section offers:

- Some things to think about as you decide if, when, and how to share
- Help to cope with stigma from others or from within

Before You Speak: Preparation

Consider using these prompts to center yourself before any conversation.

My reason for sharing:

What I need from this person right now (listening, privacy, help, prayer, nothing):

What I am not responsible for (educating, convincing, or fixing their feelings):

Before You Speak: Grounding Statement (Say Silently)

“My diagnosis does not define my worth. I am allowed to take up space and tell my truth.”

Ways to Share Your Status

Direct and Clear—When You Want Simplicity

“I want to share something important about my health. I’m living with HIV. I’m in care, I’m taking care of myself, and I wanted you to hear it from me.”

You might add: “You don’t have to say anything. I just need you to listen.”

Gentle and Centered on Relationships—Such As for Family and Close Friends

“I trust you, and because of that I want to share something personal. I’m living with HIV. It’s not always easy to navigate, but I’m okay medically, and I’m still the same person you’ve always known.”

If Faith-Focused or Spiritual Language Feels Right

“This hasn’t changed who God made me to be. I’m living with HIV, I’m taking care of my health, and I believe God is still walking with me.”

Ways to Talk About Other Health Conditions That Complicate Your Treatment

Acknowledging Complexity Without Over-Explaining

“I’m managing a few health things right now, including HIV. Some days are heavier than others, but I’m taking action to take care of myself.”

When You Want Support and Not Solutions

“I’m sharing this because I need support, not advice or judgment. What helps most is you checking in and respecting my boundaries.”

Ways to Set Boundaries After Telling Someone About Your HIV

When You Want Privacy

“This is my story to tell. I’m not comfortable with anyone else knowing right now.”

When the Person You’re Telling Asks Questions About HIV

“I’m not in a place to answer a lot of questions today. If you want to learn more, I can point you to resources later.”

Ways to Respond to Stigma or Misinformation

If Someone Has Old or Wrong Ideas About HIV

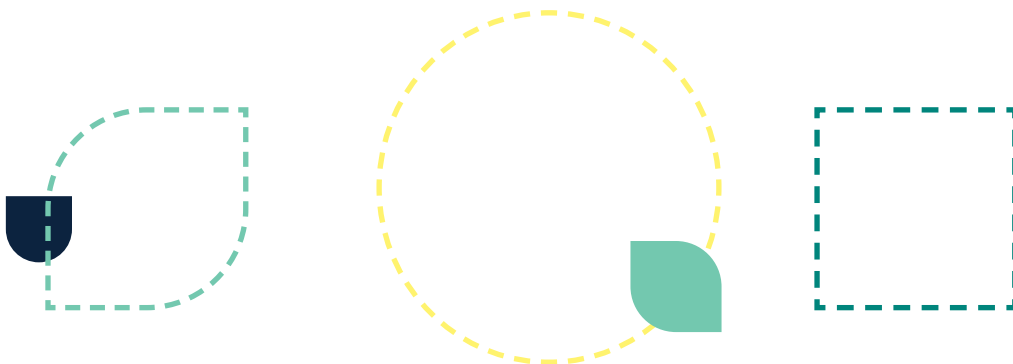
“I am living a healthy, full life with HIV, which is now a manageable chronic condition. I’m happy to share accurate information when you’re ready to hear it.”

If Someone Says Something Hurtful

“That comment was painful. I need our conversations to be respectful if we’re going to keep talking about this.”

If the Person You’re Telling Becomes Distant

“I’ve noticed some distance between us since I shared my status. I want to check in, because I value our relationship.”



Ways to Tell Someone You’re Not Ready to Share Your Status, or May Never Be

Deflect Without Lying

“I’m dealing with some personal health things, and I’m handling them with my care team.”

Ending the Conversation

“I’m not ready to talk about this right now. I hope you can respect that.”

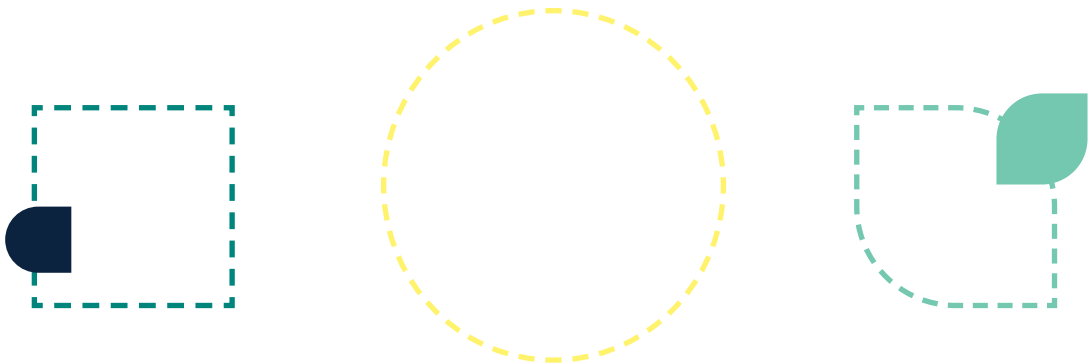
Coping With Stigma You May Feel

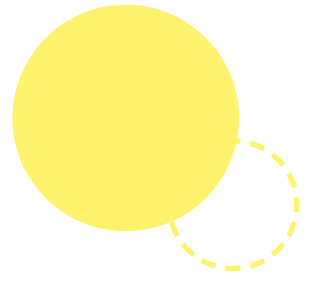
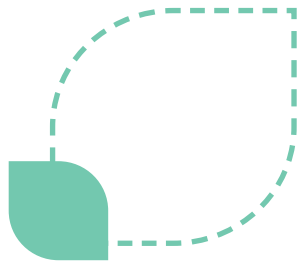
Sometimes the hardest voice to fight is your own. Replace harmful inner thoughts with helpful truths.

Harmful	Helpful
“This makes me unlovable.”	“I am worthy of love, care, and joy—exactly as I am.”
“I should be ashamed.”	“Shame does not belong to me. HIV is a medical condition, not a moral failure.”
“I’m a burden.”	“Needing support does not make me a burden. It makes me human.”



Breaking the silence can mean you don’t have to experience this alone.





Daily Affirmations

“My life has value.”

“I am enough as I am.”

“I am worthy.”

“I get to decide who has access to my story.”

“Healing includes my body, mind,
spirit, and voice.”

After the Conversation: Care for Yourself

 Journal for 5 minutes

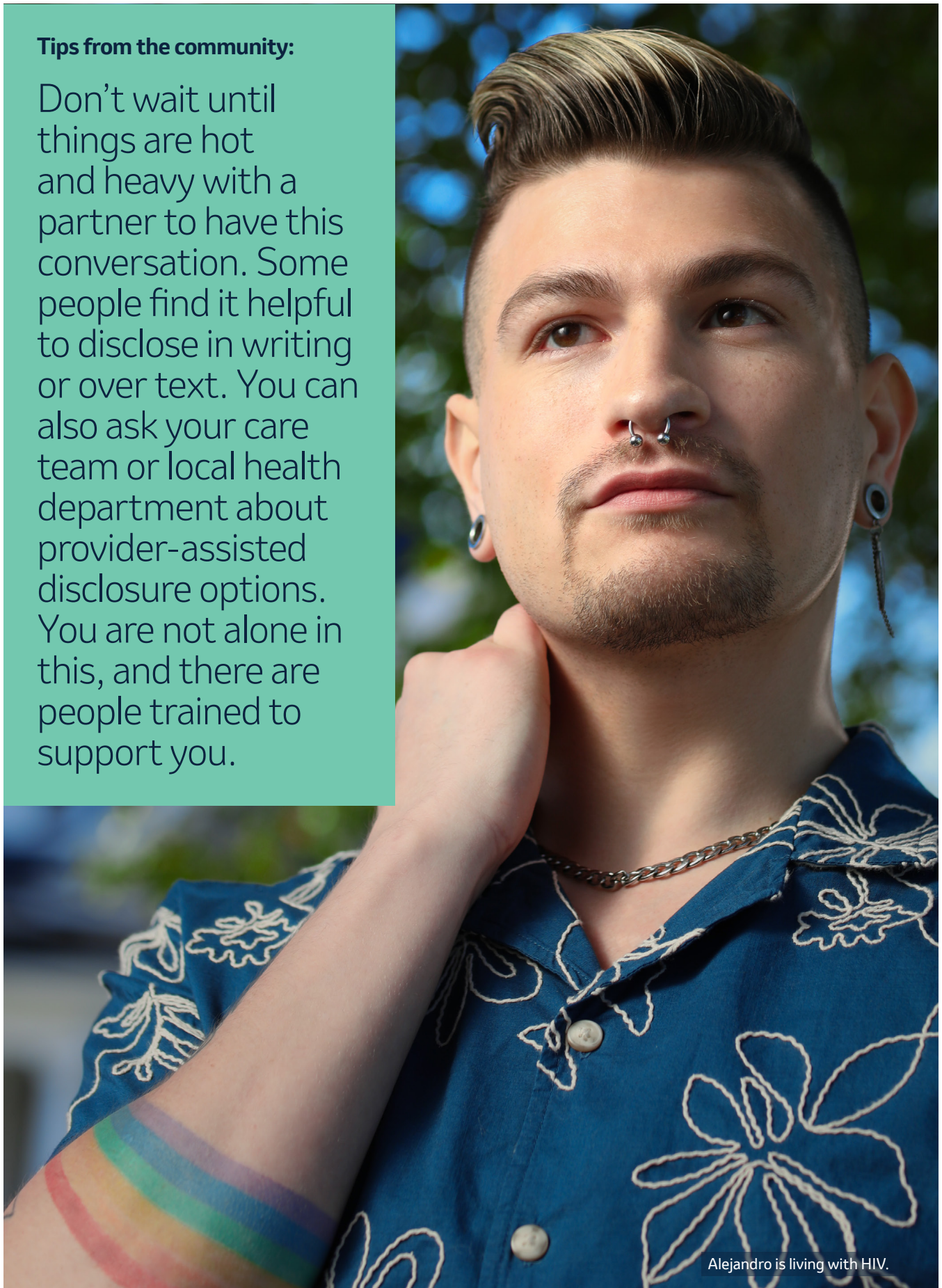
 Move your body or step outside

 Text a safe person

 Remind yourself: “I was brave today.”

Tips from the community:

Don't wait until things are hot and heavy with a partner to have this conversation. Some people find it helpful to disclose in writing or over text. You can also ask your care team or local health department about provider-assisted disclosure options. You are not alone in this, and there are people trained to support you.



Alejandro is living with HIV.



Julian (pictured left), Honey (pictured middle), and Alejandro (pictured right) are living with HIV.

I need more support from the people around me. How do I ask for it?

Here are some suggested questions to ask to get the support you may be looking for.

Question	Why This Matters?
“Are there support groups or mental health resources near me for people with HIV?”	You don’t have to figure this out alone. Ask your care team about local support groups, peer counselors, or community organizations where you can connect with people who understand what you’re going through.
“Sometimes the stigma around HIV feels heavier than the diagnosis itself. Can we talk about that?”	Stigma is real, and it can wear on your mental health in ways that aren’t always visible. Naming it with your care team is a powerful step—they can help connect you with support that addresses the emotional toll.
“How do I find a therapist or counselor who understands what it’s like to live with HIV?”	The right mental health support can help make a difference. Ask your care team for referrals to professionals experienced in working with people with HIV, or explore opportunities through your local health department.

My Social Health Reflection

The people in your life play a powerful role in your health. Take a moment to think about the relationships that matter most to you. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

The person I trust most with my health journey: _____

Someone who always makes me laugh: _____

A relationship I want to strengthen: _____

One way I can show up for someone in my Hive: _____

Mapping My Hive

Think about the people in your social support circle. Who fills each role and where are the gaps?

The person I can call at any time:

Someone who helps me get to appointments or manage logistics:

A person who holds me accountable (my Hive partner):

Someone I'd like to invite into my Hive:

A gap in my Hive I want to work on filling:

Celebrating My Hive

This is your judgment-free space to celebrate your Hive. Who has held space for you? Who made you laugh, let you cry, or just sat with you in silence?



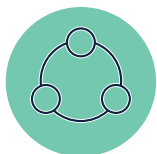
Write their names, doodle their 'vibe,' or color in the warmth they brought to your week. Let their light fill this page. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

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Want to see how others are building their Hives?
Visit HiveofWholeHealth.com for stories and inspiration.

Basic Needs



James is living with HIV.

Let's get down to the basics. A roof over your head. Food in your fridge. These aren't extras, they're the foundation. When you're living with HIV, having your basic needs met is part of your health. Safe and stable housing, nutritious food, and access to care create the ground you stand on so everything else has room to grow.

“It’s important to find people where they are. Not trying to come with a prescribed recipe for whole health. Instead, we should help people recognize the importance of not only viral suppression, but also integrating social determinants of health—like housing—into their care.”

Moisés Agosto-Rosario

MPH, Member of Your Hive of Whole Health Advisory Council, NMAC



James is living with HIV.

A Place to Call Home

About half of people with HIV in the U.S. have trouble finding safe and stable housing at some point. This may be due to stigma, medical costs, lower income, or illness. But problems with housing can be solved with help.

Here are some resources that can help you find a place to call home.

Scan the QR codes to learn more:



Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA). This federal program is designed to support the housing needs of people with HIV and their families. Local HOPWA programs may provide short- or long-term rental assistance, community residences, or supportive housing specifically for people with HIV.



You may qualify for other housing programs, too. People with HIV can apply for any U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing program they are eligible for, including:

- Public housing
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Local homelessness services.

Help is available if you're at risk of losing housing. HUD's Resource Locator can connect you with nearby housing programs, shelters, and support services.



Merck's Support Near Me website is an option to find local support, including help with housing. Scan this QR code and it will take you to the website.



Have more questions about basic needs?

Head over to HiveofWholeHealth.com to get more information on why the bare necessities are vital to your whole health.



Leo (pictured right) is living with HIV.

Healthy Eating

Healthy eating can help strengthen your immune system and improve your health. A balanced diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein, and dairy and non-dairy alternatives.

This means more veggies and lean meats, and less sugar, saturated fats such as butter, and salt. Small changes along the way, like switching from fries to a baked potato or swapping sugar-heavy lattes in the mornings for protein such as yogurt, can help in big ways.

Here are a few additional steps to consider for healthy eating:

- Talk with your care team before making big changes to what you eat. Many care centers have dietitians who can help you understand your needs and create a nutrition plan that supports your health.
- Healthy eating doesn't have to be expensive. Food assistance may be available. Ask your care team about healthy eating apps, local food resources, and food assistance programs you may qualify for to help stretch your budget.
- Merck's Support Near Me website can also be a resource for finding fresh and affordable groceries that are available near you. Scan this QR code and it will take you directly to the website, where you can find help in your area.



Support Near Me



Actor portrayal of healthcare professional (pictured left); Lizzie (pictured right) is living with HIV.

My Whole Health Care Team

Having your basic needs met can mean that you’ve identified your whole health care team—your HIV care specialist, the nurse who’s become your constant, the friend that is your confidant, or the therapist who lets you vent in peace. Name them below and add how they help you. You can print more copies of this sheet at HiveofWholeHealth.com.

	helps me take care of my	
	helps me take care of my	
	helps me take care of my	
	helps me take care of my	
	helps me take care of my	
	helps me take care of my	

Notes:



Tips for Navigating Basic Needs Challenges

Here are some scenarios where a care team member offers a healthcare service that causes a problem, and possible ways to talk about it.

The Situation: A referral that's hard to get to.

Care team member:

"I'm referring you to a specialist across town for your [mental health/physical therapy]."

You:

"That clinic is far away and hard for me to get to. Can we look for a specialist closer to my home? Or, is telehealth an option?"

The Situation: A recommendation that doesn't work for your financial situation.

Care team member:

"I'd like you to start seeing a nutritionist and join a fitness program."

You:

"I'd love to do both, but right now that's not in my budget. Are there programs, sliding-scale options, or resources you can connect me with so I can still work toward that goal?"

[illegible]

Notes and Reflections

[illegible]

Your Hive of Whole Health

HiveofWholeHealth.com

This workbook is an educational self-reflection tool for people with HIV over the age of 18. It does not provide medical advice or replace the clinical judgment of your care team, healthcare partner, or provider.

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