



# OUT AT WORK

INFORMATION FOR HIV-POSITIVE EMPLOYEES

## OUT AT WORK ANOTHER SLICE OF FREEDOM, PLEASE!



**"BEING HIV-POSITIVE AND HIGH-PERFORMING IS NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME AS A PILOT WITH HIV THAT I DON'T HAVE TO HIDE IN THE COCKPIT. INSTEAD, I CAN FOCUS ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS: FLYING PASSENGERS AND CREW SAFELY AND COMFORTABLY TO THEIR DESTINATION."**

*Sven Dierssen, Pilot*

### BEING OPENLY HIV-POSITIVE IN THE WORKPLACE - WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

For example, peace of mind, confidence and the feeling of being accepted for who you are. Maybe even support – such as more flexible work hours when it comes to keeping medical appointments.

And you can join in on personal conversations with colleagues without having to worry about accidentally revealing anything.

**"WE COOK FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE EVERY DAY. I CAN DEAL WITH STRESS. BUT I WON'T STAND FOR PREJUDICE. MY SUPERVISOR SUPPORTS ME BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT HIV IS NOT A PROBLEM IN THE WORKPLACE."**

*Abbas, Cook*



Coming out as HIV-positive at work can be a truly liberating act. But when is the right time? You decide.

There's only so much you can do to influence the responses and attitudes of other people. They often turn out better than expected. However, there's no guarantee there won't be negative reactions. Make sure you have the support you need for a positive disclosure experience. What do you need to take this step?

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Most people living with HIV take a step-by-step approach. They first create a safe space for themselves, such as in their relationship, a friendship or with family. Then they gradually step out further and further.

In doing so, they draw on positive reactions to their first experiences of disclosing their status. If you proceed this way, you'll have a safe haven where you'll be met with understanding, and where you can share your story. This will give you confidence.

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Whether it's fair or not, those who are openly positive often become the go-to people for questions and worries about HIV. It's good to have access to reliable sources when this happens. On the back, you will find the most important facts about HIV in the workplace, as well as information about your rights. For more detailed information, visit [aidshilfe.de](http://aidshilfe.de)

If you are unsure about anything, you can get advice from us – in person, on the phone or online: [aidshilfe.de/beratung](http://aidshilfe.de/beratung).

More detailed legal information about HIV in the workplace is available from the anti-discrimination bureau at Deutsche Aidshilfe: [hiv-diskriminierung.de](http://hiv-diskriminierung.de)

## STRONGER TOGETHER



**"HIV IS NOT JUST A BIG-CITY ISSUE. FOR A LONG TIME, I THOUGHT I COULDN'T TELL ANYONE IN MY RURAL AREA THAT I WAS POSITIVE. IT WAS ONLY THE POSITIVE MEETINGS THAT GAVE ME COURAGE AND SHOWED ME THAT I WASN'T ALONE. THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT FOR REGIONAL EMPLOYERS, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS, TO STAND UP AGAINST HIV-RELATED DISCRIMINATION."**

*Hildegard Stadler, Deutsche Post DHL Group*

You are not the only person living with HIV asking themselves whether to disclose their status at work. You can benefit from the experience and knowledge of many others. Community organisations and groups offer support and practical advice.

A list of community contacts is available at: [aids-hilfe.de/hiv-selbsthilfegruppen](http://aids-hilfe.de/hiv-selbsthilfegruppen)



# HIV ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS, COLLEAGUES AND SUPERVISORS

## HIV ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

Progress in the treatment of HIV infection has been phenomenal – even if it doesn't make the headlines.



**"THE FACTS ARE CLEAR: HIV HAS NEVER BEEN TRANSMISSIBLE IN EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS, SUCH AS AT WORK. AND WITH EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, THERE IS NO RISK OF TRANSMISSION EVEN DURING SEX. THANKS TO MODERN TREATMENT, PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV CAN NOW GROW OLD AND LIVE, LOVE AND WORK LIKE EVERYONE ELSE."**

*Dr. med. Axel J. Schmidt MPH, Medicine and Health Policy Unit at Deutsche Aidshilfe*

### PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV ARE EVERYWHERE

People living with HIV work in all kinds of jobs – performing just as well and being just as successful as anyone else. There are no occupational bans, nor does HIV constitute grounds for dismissal.

### TRANSMISSION RISKS: NONE TRANSMISSION FEARS: WIDESPREAD

Just as with any other type of day-to-day contact, HIV transmission in the workplace is impossible. With treatment, HIV is no longer transmissible, even during sex. People with HIV can then become parents without fear of transmitting the virus to their partner or child. However, the fear of HIV is still widespread – although everybody could just relax!

**"IN EVERYDAY MEDICAL PRACTICE, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON WHY PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV SHOULD NOT WORK AS DOCTORS OR NURSES. THAT'S WHY WE DON'T ASK OUR EMPLOYEES ABOUT THEIR STATUS. IF YOU WANT TO OPEN UP TO US, WE WILL MAKE IT CLEAR: WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE AND WE WILL STAND TOGETHER AGAINST HIV STIGMA."**

*Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Sebastian Schellong, Medical Director, Dresden City Hospital*



### WORKING POSITIVELY: RESPECT AND A MATTER-OF-FACT ATTITUDE

Employers can do a lot for people living with HIV, and thereby promote a respectful environment that benefits everyone. As an employer, you can model openness and take a public stance against discrimination in the workplace and in our Society.



**"WE AIM TO COMMUNICATE TO ALL NEW EMPLOYEES THAT DIVERSITY ENRICHES OUR PROFESSIONAL LIVES. REGARDLESS OF HIV STATUS, WE FOSTER A WORKPLACE CULTURE THAT IS FREE FROM PREJUDICE. IN THIS WAY, WE CAN SUPPORT OUR EMPLOYEES BY CREATING AN APPRECIATIVE, MOTIVATED AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT."**

*Manfred Baer, Senior Partner, IBM Consulting*

### WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

- Sign the **#positivarbeiten** declaration about HIV in the workplace! It's a strong statement, and a commitment to supporting people living with HIV.
- Breathe life into its principles in the workplace: through information materials, in conversations about diversity or through continuing education on HIV. The local Aidshilfe organisations offer lectures, workshops and one-on-one counselling. Find your nearest Aidshilfe at [aidshilfe.de/adressen](https://aidshilfe.de/adressen)

- Consider the needs of people with chronic conditions, for example by offering more flexible work environment and hours to make it easier to attend medical appointments or participate in support groups.

The declaration, case studies and suggestions for Action are available at: [positiv-arbeiten.de](https://positiv-arbeiten.de)

**"TODAY, PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV CAN HAVE LONG AND FULFILLING LIVES AND CAREERS. IT'S PARTICULARLY DISTRESSING THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS NOT YET FULLY REACHED SOME HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS. THAT'S WHY WE STATE CLEARLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT HIV DISCRIMINATION HAS NO PLACE IN NURSING AND MEDICINE."**

*Christine Vogler, Berlin Education Campus for Health Professions (Berliner Bildungscampus für Gesundheitsberufe gGmbH) and German Nursing Council*



### RIGHT IS RIGHT

Not everyone living with HIV can or wants to be open about their status. They alone decide where and when to talk about it. All employees have a right to privacy. This includes personal health information.



**"HUMANITY MUST COME FIRST. BOTH SUPERVISORS AND COLLEAGUES SHOULD EMBODY THIS PRINCIPLE, AS IT PROMOTES MUTUAL RESPECT AND APPRECIATION. THAT'S WHY WE OPPOSE ANY FORM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV OR OTHER CHRONIC DISEASES."**

*Dr. Volkmar Schön, Vice-President of the German Red Cross, Hamburg*

HIV tests must not be made compulsory as part of pre-employment medicals. Even offering a 'voluntary' test is out of place. This is because people may be disadvantaged if they return a positive result, or even if they simply refuse the test.

And, if HIV status is supposedly irrelevant – why test in the first place?



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