



Session 6: Aging Positively: **Taking Action Across the Lifespan**

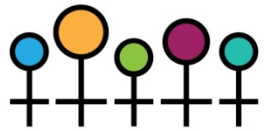
April 8, 2025, 9am PT / 12pm ET

Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime

www.thewellproject.org

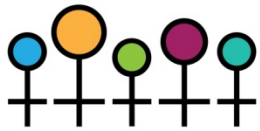
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About The Well Project

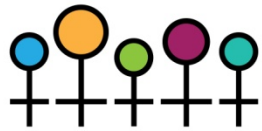
- Non-profit organization with a mission to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls across the gender spectrum
- Leverages technology to improve health outcomes and increase quality of life for women and girls living with HIV
- Our focus: education and information, community support, advocacy and leadership, collaborative engagement, and women-focused HIV research
- Access our resources and join our community at www.thewellproject.org



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About *WATCH! 2.0*

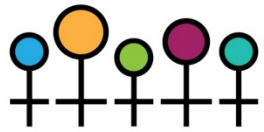
- Treatment advocacy webinar series, based on our successful 2015 series *A Place at the Table: WATCH!*
- 7 monthly sessions; 1 hour each
- Capacity building and training for women living with HIV and with reasons for HIV prevention across the gender spectrum
- Series topics will include advocacy basics, treatment and prevention, sexual and reproductive health, aging, research
- Participation in live sessions encouraged; recordings of sessions will be available to those unable to attend
- Certificates of completion will be issued to participants upon finishing the series and required evaluations/post-tests based on content of each episode
- *This episode is supported by a grant from Merck*



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A Note on Gender and Language

- We are proud to be a resource that welcomes and focuses on women across the gender spectrum – that means all women who identify as such – as well as all people who can benefit from our materials and support networks
- We not only acknowledge and affirm but celebrate the existence of our community members of trans and nonbinary experience
- The language we use on our website and in our programs reflects this affirmation; our commitment is to grow ***stronger*** in this practice and ***more inclusive*** in our language



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Agenda

- Welcome
- Who Is Aging with HIV?
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Preparing for Aging Well
- Q&A
- Closing

Today's Presenters



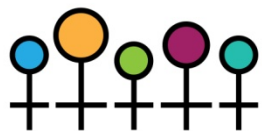
Marcya Gullatte, LMSW
The Well Project CAB



Antoinette N. Jones
Dandelions, Inc.



Bridgette Picou, LVN, ACLPN
Moderator
The Well Project

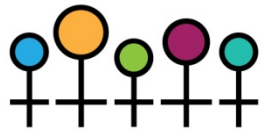


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Aging Positively

- People are acquiring HIV at older ages – and living longer, fuller lives with HIV – than ever
- Advances in HIV treatment have made it possible for people living with HIV – including lifetime survivors of HIV – to live far longer than imaginable before

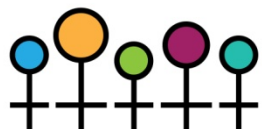




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Who Is Aging with HIV?

- In 2022 in the US, people aged 50 and older accounted for:
 - @ 54% of people living with HIV
 - @ 16% of new HIV cases
- **Long-term survivors** are people have lived with HIV for many years (at least 10)
- **Lifetime survivors (Dandelions)** are those who acquired HIV at birth or in early childhood
 - US in 2021: 13,000 lifetime survivors of HIV, mostly over age 13

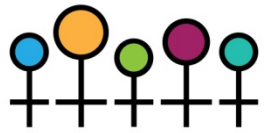


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Living and Aging with HIV

Why do some health concerns of aging seem to happen **earlier** and **faster** in people living with HIV?

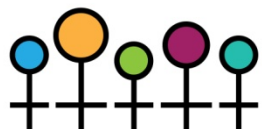
- Potential long-term effects of HIV treatment
 - Lifetime survivors' treatment histories tend to be just as complex as those of older-adult long-term survivors
- Inflammation
 - In a person living with HIV, immune system always activated (“turned on”) over many years
 - May be less about HIV than higher rates of traditional risk factors (smoking, stress)
 - Eating well, exercising, managing other health conditions, and taking HIV treatment can all help reduce levels of inflammation



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The Dandelions Movement

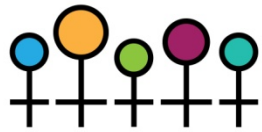
- Started in 2023 at Washington, DC gathering led by women of color with early acquired HIV
 - Named for spoken-word piece “Dandelions” by Mary Bowman
- Came up with a list of crucial demands to address lack of research, programming, and representation – including:
 - Respect
 - Inclusion
 - To be reflected in decision-making tables



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Sexual and Reproductive Health

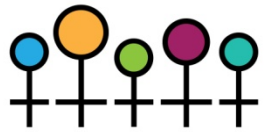
- Older women remain sexually active
 - Many continue dating, or return following a partner death or end of a long relationship
 - May not be aware of PrEP or other HIV prevention options
 - May have gone through menopause and not use condoms for birth control – though condoms can prevent STI transmission at any age
- Providers must talk about sexual health with their 50-and-older and lifetime survivor clients
 - GYN care still important for women growing older with HIV
 - Sexual healthcare should include:
 - Conversations that affirm women's sexual expression
 - Respectful safer conception resources for lifetime survivors and other women of childbearing age



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Sex Is Good for You!

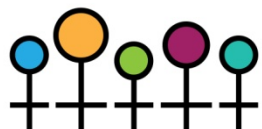
- Pleasurable sex doesn't have to stop because of HIV or aging!
- Aging and menopause may bring body changes related to sexuality – can learn to navigate while having a fulfilling sexual life
- Sexual pleasure is good for you emotionally and physically and can lead to
 - lower stress
 - better sleep
 - increased levels of oxytocin (the “love hormone”)
 - ... and **more!**



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Perimenopause and Menopause

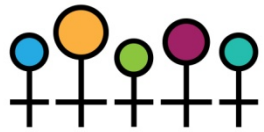
- **Perimenopause:** transitional time leading to menopause
- **Menopause:** point in time when menstrual periods stop
 - Will eventually affect all people with a uterus
 - Learn more and prepare to discuss menopause: bit.ly/MenopauseHIV
- Effects of menopause can be treated with:
 - Hormone replacement therapy
 - Complementary treatments
 - Taking steps to stay healthy



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Preparing for Healthy Aging

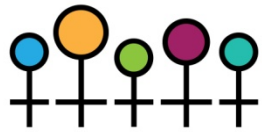
- Monitor HIV and overall health
 - Regular checkups and dental visits
 - Learn more about important screenings and vaccinations at bit.ly/WomenHIVHealthTests
 - Strong relationships with providers are also key to aging well
- Stay mentally and physically active
 - Reading, puzzles
 - Low-impact activities like walking, weightlifting, and swimming – benefits for body, brain, and bones



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Preparing for Healthy Aging

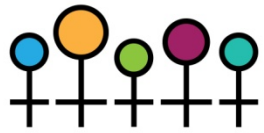
- Connect with social support
 - Connection reduces isolation, increases sense of safety
 - Build community in person or online
 - Can include anyone: family, friends, other women living with HIV – even pets
- Consider mental health counselor, health educator, or peer counselor
- Explore ***body positivity*** and ***self-love***



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Creating an Aging Plan

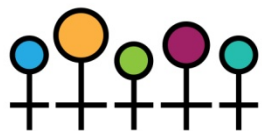
- Allows for more thoughtful decisions about where and how you wish to age; reduces stress of process
 - Discuss with family and friends
 - Consider doing sooner rather than later!
- Plan may include:
 - Care planning; long-term care insurance
 - Legal documents (e.g., will, power of attorney for health, etc.)
 - Financial check-ups
 - Building a safe home environment



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Women Surviving and Thriving Over a Lifetime with HIV

- More research is needed into issues related to early-acquired HIV
- Lifetime survivors need spaces to connect
- Listen to women who have lived with HIV for their entire lives and figured out how to thrive!



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Growing Older with Intention

We can strive to age with intention by consistently choosing to be positive about aging and life with HIV. We can remember the upsides to aging, such as:

**INCREASED
CONFIDENCE**

**GREATER SENSE OF
SELF-WORTH**

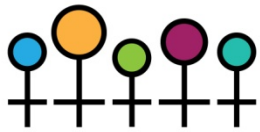


**LIVED
EXPERIENCE**

WISDOM

PATIENCE

These attributes can ease the path to aging with grace and growth.



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Learn More!

*Scan the QR code for **more resources** on this topic from The Well Project, and to access the **video and survey** following this session!*



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