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Spotlight on Jyoti Dhawale-Surve: Women Making a Difference

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The Well Project interviews Jyoti Dhawale-Surve for the newest in our "Spotlight: Women Making a Difference" series.

What is the goal of your advocacy work?

Educating people generally about HIV/AIDS and helping PLWHA in understanding their medicines, the importance of adherence and how to better care of themselves. I am also trying to make female condoms easily accessible and available in the market.

Why is it important to you to reach out to women specifically?

As a woman myself, I know how hard is it to live with the virus and not to let day-to-day activities affect me. It is important to understand the "positive" concept behind it to remain in control. Thus it is important to train your body, mind and soul to remain healthy.

Do you think HIV positive women face unique challenges? What are they?

The most challenging task that women have is to keep the home running. And if one is a working woman then the responsibility is even greater. Marriage and motherhood is the most daunting task while being on medicines.



What is the thing you are most proud of, professionally or personally?

Professionally, I am grateful for the recognition I am getting through my writings. The Well Project itself has opened the doors and paved the way for me to reach out to many. On the home front, I am grateful to have an understanding husband. Though he is HIV-negative, he has supported me whenever I was down and out.

If you could visit one place in the world, where would it be?

Hawaii (I love the sea, sun and sand). And Hawaii is rated as one of the most exotic beaches.

What advice or information would you offer a woman newly diagnosed with HIV?

Learning to accept. When one is newly diagnosed, one is filled with fear because of the stigma associated with it. Then comes dealing/coping with lot of changes while on medications. But when a woman learns to finally accept herself, she emerges as a winner.

Can you share a story that illustrates how you've been successful in working with women living with HIV?

A Girl Like Me has published many articles where I talk about my own experiences, which inspires and motivates others. On the home front, my husband and I set an example by meeting women and letting them know that there is more to life despite having HIV. India is a very conservative country and many women live under fear. Along with my husband, we try to banish those fears and misconceptions by educating them, setting ourselves as examples.

What difference has The Well Project made in your life and work?

Because of its vast treasure of knowledge, it has made me grow. Not only that, it has made me stronger in how to better take care of myself. It has also made me wiser in knowing about new developments as well as happenings in other countries. My husband too is a great fan of this site.



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