SESSION 6
STRENGTHENING THE VILLAGE
(Group Session)

Type of Session
Group

Session Outline
Activity A: Opening and Welcome (10 minutes)
Activity B: Review Last Session (5 minutes)
Activity C: Overview of Current Session (5 minutes)
Activity D: Review Homework (20 minutes)
Activity E: Sharing the Reality of HIV (35 minutes)
Activity F: Confronting Triggers (20 minutes)
Activity G: Homework (5 minutes)
Activity H: Eban Closing Circle Ritual (20 minutes)

Session Goals:
The goals of this session are:

- Identify Barriers to Practicing Safer Sex
- Problem Solve Overcoming Barriers
- Enhance Identification with the Village

Materials Needed to Conduct Session
- CD track #9: “Sexual Healing” by Marvin Gaye
- CD player
- Newsprint: Group Rules
- Poster #1: Eban symbol
- Poster #3: Nguzo Saba
- Poster #6: FENCE
- Poster #19: Quotations from Cole
- Facilitators’ Workbook
- Post It Flip Chart
- Magic Markers
- Homework #6: Practice Planning Ahead for Safer Sex
- Envelopes and Reimbursement (if handed out by facilitators)
**Instructional Time:**
2 hours (120 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Opening and Welcome</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Review Last Session</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
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<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
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<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
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<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Confronting Triggers</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Homework</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
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<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimated Time = 2 hours (120 Minutes)

**Tips to Facilitators**

- Model the Talk and Listen Technique by reflecting what the couple is saying.
- Reinforce Strategies that Involve Planning Ahead
Activity A: Opening and Welcoming

**Time:**
10 minutes

**Materials needed:**
- Clock
- Tape Recorder
- Newsprint: Ground Rules
- Poster #1: Eban symbol
- Poster #3: Nguzo Saba
- Poster #6: FENCE
- CD track #9: “Sexual Healing” by Marvin Gaye.
- Poster #19: Quotation from Cole

**Procedure:**
1. Start by saying,

   *Welcome back to the village!*  
   
   *We would like to begin by talking about the song for today, “Sexual Healing.”*

2. Play “Sexual Healing” by Marvin Gaye.

   *What does this song mean to you?*  
   
   *How does this song make you feel?*  
   
   *How does this song relate to your relationship and practicing safer sex?*

3. Be sure that the Poster #19: Quotation from Cole is on the wall.
We would also like to have volunteers read the quotation for today. This quote is by Johnetta Cole, the president of Spelman College, and the first African American to head this historically Black college for women.

“A woman who stands behind her man will not be able to see where she is going! But when one person stands along side another, there is an increased strength and 1 + 1 = 11” by Johnetta B. Cole (See Workbook).

What does this quotation mean for you and for the community you are building?

How does this quotation related to the principle for today: Ujima or Collective Work and Responsibility.

4. Reinforce any answer.

- Yes, we are all connected.
- We are a community, and if we work collectively then together we can help our community survive and thrive.
- We can help and support each other.
- We are strong when we are united and working together.
- We should work together as equals to be strong.

What does Johnetta Cole’s quote tell us about protecting each other by using condoms and other methods?

- Yes, we can work together to protect each other from HIV and STDs.
This quote also introduces what we will talk about today because as we have discussed, each of you is here with a partner, you are a couple.

This group is a larger community which can support each couple.
Activity B: Review of Last Session

**Time:**
5 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
None

**Procedure:**
1. Start by saying,

   *We covered a lot of material last week.*

   *We took some time to get to know each other and talked about what it means to be part of the African American community.*

   *We talked about how to deal with challenges like negative judgments about black people and people living with HIV.*

   *We looked at how we have the knowledge, power and skills to choose how to protect ourselves and rise above obstacles.*

   *We talked about our social support network and how we might share our HIV status with other people.*
Activity C: Overview of Current Session (5 minutes)

**Time:**
5 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
- Newsprint – Goals for Session
- Poster #3: Nguzo Saba

**Procedure:**
1. Start by saying,

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Today is our third session as a group.

This session is based on Nguzo Saba Number Three- Collective Work and Responsibility or Ujima.

This is the principle that you can work together with your partner to make responsible decisions to protect and support each other, including decisions to practice safer sex. We can also work together in this village and in the one that you will establish at home and in your community.

We will talk about how HIV has affected your relationship, and how it affects your use of condoms and other safer sex methods.

We would like to review barriers to couples using condoms and talking to each other about sex.

We will also practice the Talk and Listen Technique and using FENCE to problem solving overcoming barriers to correct condom use.
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Activity D: Review Homework

Time:
20 minutes

Materials Needed:
Homework for Session 5 (in workbook)
Couple Goal Progress worksheet

Procedure:
1. Start by saying,

   Last session, we asked you to assess the support you had in your life, and work on strengthening your bond with someone from your support network or with someone from the group.

2. Wait for volunteers to share their experiences; use some of the questions below to begin the discussion.

   - How did that go?
   - How did you choose for yourselves who you could get support from?
   - What techniques did you use to increase your support?
   - What was successful?
   - Did you find social support from your family, friends, health care providers, or people from the group?
   - Did any problems come up?
• How did you handle them?

• How can you work on them next time?

Would anyone else like to share their experiences?

You all did very well last week on your homework.

It is important to acknowledge that what you all have accomplished in working on your homework takes a lot of courage. You all have worked towards or accomplished something that can take people years to do. By turning to people you feel you can trust, you can increase the support and encouragement you receive from others. This can help you cope with the stress of living with HIV/AIDS. This is a huge success. What you have done is commendable!

Now that you have discussed your goals for increasing your support, let’s check on the goals that you have set as a couple to reduce your risks for HIV and STD’s and improve your relationship.

Would you like to share how you have been doing on your goals, and talk about the strategies you used to work on your couple goals during the week?

Can anyone share an experience using FENCE?

3. Accomplishments should be recorded on the Couple Goal Setting Form.
Activity E: Sharing the Reality of HIV

**Time:**
35 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
None

**Procedure:**
1. Start by saying,

   *Our first activity is called The Eban Fence of Safety. This is collective and shared talk and listen activity.*

   *The objective is to “share the load” of living with HIV, and hear each other talk about what it’s like to be affected by HIV.*

2. If the space or the number of participants does not permit a real circle, explain to the group that they should image being surrounded by a safe fence. They can form a U-shape in a corner of the room or a horse-shoe in the middle of the room.

   *We are going to ask the HIV negative partners to form a fence of safety over here.*

   *Then, the HIV positive partners will be invited into the center of this protective human fence over there.*

   *This is an opportunity for you as a village to collectively share how HIV affects your lives.*

   *First, HIV positive individuals will discuss how HIV impacts your life with each other.*

   *Then, those of you forming the fence will reflect what they heard the group say and, then, you will switch places and the HIV positive partners will form the fence.*
We understand that this may feel uncomfortable but sometimes we learn the most when we do something that is uncomfortable.

We have been a part of this Eban Program for five sessions and we hope that you trust that the group will support you and “share the load” with you, allowing each of you to feel safe and to share on your own terms.

We are here to support each other without judging one another, so that we can encourage each other to protect ourselves.

The reason that we have this activity is that other couples have found it to be powerful for them. This is an opportunity to share but it is not an obligation. If you decide that you are not ready to share within the fence, you do not have to.

We want to remind you that as a group, we are committed to keeping everything discussed within the group confidential.

We would like to take a 5-minute break so that each couple can talk among themselves about whether they’d like to participate. Do you have any questions about this activity before you take a break to make your decision?

FACILITATOR’S NOTE:

Take a 5-minute break to allow the couples to discuss what they want to do.

3. At the end of the break, facilitators should privately check with each couple to see if they are willing to participate. If not, both members of the couple can sit on the protective fence and just observe.
4. Participants should divide into the inner circle, and the outer protective fence. The facilitators should go to the groups with the fewest of same sex participants to try to equalize gender between the groups.

Okay. We want the HIV positive partners to talk directly to each other about their HIV status and how this affects their lives and relationships and their partners will sit quietly and listen.

5. The facilitator in the inner circle should ask the question only to get the discussion going among the HIV positive persons.

How does it feel to be affected by HIV and how does it affect your relationship and practicing safer sex?

6. Facilitator on the inside should reinforce HIV positive partners talking to each other. Then, the facilitator on the outside fence should ask the HIV negative partners to reflect on what they have heard.

Now we would like to reflect back what you heard the group say.

7. Facilitator on the outer fence should let HIV negative partners reflect back what they heard and, then, ask the following question.

What was it like to hear the group share their experiences within the fence?
8. Wait for and reinforce responses.

9. When each HIV positive person has had an opportunity to share feelings and the seronegative persons have reflected what they heard, suggest that they switch roles.

Now we would like to have the HIV positive partners form the fence and invite the HIV negative partners into the center.

10. The facilitator in the inner circle should ask the question only to get the discussion going among the HIV negative persons.

How does it feel to be affected by HIV and does it affect your relationship and practicing safer sex?

11. The facilitator in the inner circle should reinforce HIV negative partners talking to each other. Then, the facilitator in the outer fence should have the HIV positive partners reflect on what they have heard.

Now we would like you to reflect back what you heard the group say.

12. The facilitator in the outer fence should let HIV positive partners reflect back what they heard and, then, ask the following question.
What was it like to hear the group share their experiences within the fence?

13. Wait for and reinforce responses.

Good work. We are proud of how well you were able to talk to each other about sharing the reality of HIV.

14. Debrief with the whole group.

What was it like to do this discussion?

What did you learn from it?

Living with HIV can be challenging. But you’ve shown that you are strong, and that you are here for each other to “share the load” of living with HIV. As Johnetta Cole said, “When one person stands along side another, there is an increased strength and \(1 + 1 = 11\).

When you’re confronted with these challenges, you can face them together and remember your strength, applying the principle of Collective Work and Responsibility, or Ujima. Remember the importance of being proud of who you are, not based on anything outside of yourself, but your inner worth (Self-determination, or Kujichagulia). We don’t need to use what’s outside of us to feel good about ourselves.

15. Take a short break before continuing to the next exercise
Activity F: Confronting Triggers

Time:
20 minutes

Materials Needed:
- Flipchart
- Markers
- Poster #6: FENCE
- Worksheet on Triggers (from Workbook, section 4-5)
- Self-Talk (in Workbook, section 6-3)

Procedure:
1. Start by saying,

   A couple weeks ago we talked about triggers. Does anyone remember what a trigger is?

2. Wait for responses.

   A trigger is something that leads to being unsafe.

   We would like to use FENCE to problem solve handling triggers.

   Would a couple like to volunteer one of the triggers to risky behavior that they are confronting?

3. If the couples are reluctant to volunteer their trigger as an example, facilitators can use one of the following scenarios.
**Scenario One**

You and your partner have been doing a good job of using a condom. One night you are both very excited and your partner says to you: “Remember how good it used to feel without a condom. Let’s just do it once without a condom. I want that old feeling again. Once cannot hurt us.”

**Scenario Two**

You have a fight with your partner that lasts several days, and then finally make up. Neither of you want to talk or say anything to interrupt the moment as you start getting hot and want to make love. Then you realize there are no condoms in the house.

4. Guide the group through using FENCE to problem solve the couple’s trigger or one of these scenarios. When they are naming options, encourage them to apply Ujima – collective work and responsibility.

5. Always check with the couple to make sure that they are comfortable with the plan. If they are not comfortable or are unsure, ask what they would like to do that would be more comfortable for them.

Now, we would like each couple to try this out together and to help each other problem solve so you can do this by yourselves. We will share the load by helping you go through the steps.

6. Facilitators prompt couples to refer to their personal triggers list from Session 4, in their Workbook section 4-5.
After you have agreed on which trigger you would like to work on, use FENCE to develop plans for how to avoid having triggers result in risky behaviors.

7. Give them a few minutes to do this.

You did a great job of using the problem solving approach to collectively come up with a plan for dealing with your triggers. We can all learn a lot from each other.

Would you like to share with each other the solutions you came up with for dealing with your triggers and practicing safe sex?

8. Use some of the following questions to begin a discussion of how couples can address the triggers they just discussed and the barriers mentioned in the previous group-within-a-group exercise.

What are some ways that you have used to incorporate condoms into your sex life?

What are some ways you have used to make condoms sexy?

What are some other things you can try to make them sexy and fun?

9. Facilitators can reinforce responses with some of the following ideas.

- You can use condoms as a method of foreplay.

- You can think up a sexual fantasy using condoms.
• You can be sensual when putting condoms on.

• The woman can put it on with her hand or her mouth.

• You can hide one on your body and ask your partner to find it.

• You can tease each other sexually when putting on the condom.

• You can have fun putting them on, while pretending you are different people or in different situations.

• You can use extra lubrication inside the tip of the condom and outside the condom.

• You can be silly and make jokes.

• You can use flavored, colorful, or ribbed condoms.

How can you be ready to use condoms, so you do not have to stop for a long time in the middle of sex to get it ready and put it on?

10. Facilitators can reinforce responses with some of the following ideas.

• Make sure you have condoms before you get romantic.

• Have condoms close by to eliminate fumbling.
• Practice putting them on so that it is easy when you are in the heat of passion.

How can you be close and intimate with your partner while still protecting each other?

11. Facilitators can reinforce responses with some of the following ideas.

• Do little things to show how much you love each other (i.e. like giving your partner a massage, having date night, candlelight dinners, giving little gifts).

• Visit the Eban Café and explore sexy ways to have safer sex together.

Those are great ways to confront your triggers and barriers.

Remember, a trigger is something that leads to being unsafe, and a barrier is something that gets in the way of being safe. So for example, a trigger for unsafe sex might be you had a romantic evening and got drunk. A barrier may be that condoms weren’t available.

Another example of a trigger might be getting into an argument, which can lead to unprotected make-up sex. A barrier that can get in the way of safer sex may be wanting to feel close to your partner or not wanting to remind them about their HIV.

How have you worked together on overcoming things that get in the way of protecting each other, like [mention some of the barriers brought up in group within-a group discussion]?
12. Give couples time to volunteer ways to deal with barriers discussed in the group-within-a-group exercise, and, then, reinforce positive attitude toward condoms and condom use.

Remember, using condoms is not a rejection or judgment of your HIV positive partner, but rather, showing commitment to caring for and protecting each other.

Think of condoms as a symbol of your unity or Umoja, your love and commitment to each other.

You have helped each other by sharing some of the ways that you as a couple have overcome the challenges that make it hard to practice safer sex.

Do you think you can use these strategies to overcome your barriers and triggers?

13. SELF-TALK

14. Facilitators introduce the skill of self-talk to help participants build commitment to safer sex when confronted with triggers or barriers.

Another way to deal with triggers and barriers so that you can practice safer sex is to use what we call “self-talk.”

Self-talk is identifying messages that you can use as positive motivators instead of self-defeating ones.
How you talk to yourself can really affect your attitude. You need to stay in an “I can do it” mode, and you can support each other in doing so.

If you say something like “I cannot use condoms, it is too hard, so I might as well give up now,” it is going to be hard to practice safer sex.

If you say more positive things that remind you about your shared commitment to protect each other, it can help you to use condoms, even when you are faced with obstacles.

These positive messages should be in the form of “I” statements. For example:

- I can work with my partner to share the responsibility of protecting us from HIV and STDs.
- I am committed to protect myself and my partner.
- I want my partner and I to be safe and use condoms.
- I love my partner and I want to protect him and myself
- I want the two of us to be safe and healthy so we can enjoy many years together.

What are some positive statements that you can say to yourself, to remind yourself that you can be safe, even when you are confronted with your triggers? Try to use collective work and responsibility (Ujima) in creating positive statements.

You can also say these statements to support each other in using condoms and other safer sex methods. You can work together to protect one another and take responsibility for safer sex.
Activity G: Homework (5 minutes)

**Time:**
5 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
- Homework for Session 6 (in workbook, section 6-5)
- Connection Coupons
- Couple goal progress worksheet
- Condoms

**Procedure:**
1. Refer to Homework #6: Practice Planning Ahead for Safer Sex

   *In your workbook, you’ll find the activities to practice at home.*

   1. *We would like you to practice the skills you learned in Eban to work on your triggers to unsafe sex. You can come up with a plan to practice safer sex, using Eban skills such as Talk and Listen, FENCE, using male and female condoms, positive self-talk, and other strategies.*

   *Write down or discuss the strategies you used, and your experiences with using them so we can talk about it next time.*

   2. *Also, continue to check in with each other each week to talk about how you are doing and to continue sharing the Couple Connection Coupons to share love and respect for each other.*

   *When you check in with each other, use talk and listen to discuss what you felt about this session, especially the experience of discussing the reality of HIV.*
Activity H: Eban Closing Circle Ritual

**Time:**
20 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
- Ankh
- Eban Circle (Workbook, section 5-7)

**Procedure:**
1. Start by saying,

   *We would like to have the Talking Circle to share what was the most important thing that we learned from this session.*

   *We will pass around the Ankh, an ancient Egyptian symbol that represents eternal life, unity between men and women, and our collective will to survive and thrive. When you have the ankh, it is your turn to talk.*

2. Participants will talk about how they feel about what they learned and then pass the ankh to the person on their left.

   *It was very good to hear what you have learned from this project.*

   *Now we would like to form the Eban Closing Circle Ritual. We would like to stand in a circle and hold hands (if you are comfortable) to form a protective fence.*

3. Participants should stand in a circle during the Eban Closing Circle, but they don’t have to hold hands if they prefer not to.
I am going to read a statement which is in your workbook on page 5.7.

“This is the Eban circle, it represents 360 degrees of African unity, strength and solidarity. We are only as strong as our weakest link. There is protection and comfort within the circle. There is also protection from the outside because I can look over your shoulder and you can look over mine. We stand together for each person, each couple, our families, and the community.”

4. After the Eban Closing Circle, say:

We have had a great session. We look forward to seeing you again next week in the village which will be the last time that we are together as a group.

Take a few minutes to say good-bye to everyone informally.