MY CHILDREN MAKE ME THINK OUTSIDE THE HIV BOX

Joshua is turning

yet another page

THIS FRIDAY, MY second-born son, Joshua, will blow out six candles on his birthday

cake. I believe everything happens for a purpose. God brought Joshua into my life

at the right time and place.

I don’t take for granted the fact that I was able to give birth to a HIV-negative

baby. This was impossible back in the day when I was expecting my first son, Peter.

I spent countless sleepless nights worrying myself sick about what would happen

to him and people’s negativity almost made me terminate that pregnancy. I knew

nothing about mother-to-child transmission of HIV, so I’m not stretching it when I

say that God singularly came through for me.

With Joshua, I had to worry; but not about mother-to-child transmission. The

marvels of science took care of this stress.

I had to worry about conceiving. I had had miscarriages, and would have given

my fallopian tubes to carry a foetus to full term. Eventually, after waiting and almost

running out of hope, God answered my petitions.

When other women who are trying to conceive ask me about it, as if I’m the expert,

I don’t know exactly what to say: I just say it’s God.

That’s why even as I celebrate Joshua’s birthday, and the joys he brings to my life,

I realise that I’m fortunate. Many women who are living with HIV, and are dying to

have babies, can’t celebrate such joys.

I’ve always said that my children give me a reason to live. I don’t have time to

worry about my disease and death when I have these precious gifts around. When

Joshua does the funny things that he does, I take these as God-given opportunities

to think out of the HIV box.

Oh yes, I lose it sometimes when Joshua is being a holy terror. But I try and view

these as time-outs from HIV.

**Sense and sensitivity**

I’m grateful that my children don’t judge me on account of my HIV status. When

Joshua rushes to give me antiretroviral drugs, I feel loved and cared for.

Joshua still doesn’t fully understand why his mother has to take all these drugs

every day, like clockwork, but he doesn’t have burnouts. He’s a great treatment

buddy.

Unlike Peter, Joshua does not know about the bad old days. He’s adored by everyone

around him, and doesn’t know the agony of stigma and discrimination.

Joshua has only seen me receiving awards and accolades. He hasn’t seen the

clubs that were swung at me, and the unkind words that were served to us every

day.

As Joshua grows older, I want him to be sensitive to the plight of people who are

unfortunate or who are living with challenges. I know if, for instance, other children

on the school playground would’ve been sensitive to Peter, it would have made a

big difference.

The best part is that Joshua has seen me living and ministering to infected and

affected children. Without being told, he knows the right thing to do. But then

again, I know it will make a bigger impact if he hears the gospel of sense and sensitivity

from the horse’s mouth.

I love the fact that Joshua has a relationship with his father. That’s essential. I was

daddy’s little girl, and it made me who I am. So I know what it means for a child to

have a father figure in their life.

That’s not to say that single mothers aren’t up to scratch in the parenting department.

Look at me. I brought up Peter single-handedly, and he turned out good. But

I’ll be the first to admit that had his father been around – or had he had a father

figure – he would’ve turned out even better. It’s only the other year that he asked

about his paternal relatives, and I had to let him find his roots.

Like all couples, my partner Richard and I have our issues, but I thank him for being

around and nurturing our children. His presence and input makes a world of a

difference.

Happy birthday, Joshua.

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