JOSHUA DOESN’T LIKE GIRLS WHO TALK TOO LOUDLY

Is it too early to give my son ‘the talk’?

**LATE LAST YEAR,** Joshua turned six. We celebrated his birthday because, like all my children, his life has given me tonnes of life. When I look at my three little ones, I “eyeball” HIV and go, “Three strikes, you’re out!”

Someone asked why I give my children Biblical names. I have good reasons: I believe in a supreme being. I have no doubt that I’ve come this far because of God’s doing, not mine.

Were it not for God shining the lights called Peter, Joshua and Issa into my dark existence, I’m sure I’d still be groping around a bleak endless tunnel. I’m not a perfect

Christian, but the Bible remains my reference point. Even Joshua’s christening was drawn from this spiritual belief; that names speak volumes.

After accepting being HIV-positive, I endeavoured to live a constructive life. Joshua’s birth was the icing on my living positively cake. In fact, his name symbolised myconquering the barriers that had been placed in my path because of my HIV status.

Joshua was a new page, personal and public, in the fight against HIV. Although

he was not the first to be born HIV-free from a HIV-positive mother, I proudly report

he was the first to be declared publicly as having escaped HIV despite being born to

HIV-positive parents, so he symbolised hope among those who are HIV-infected.

Many HIV-positive couples got children after I shared my conception experience.

How many tested negative/positive is a story for another Wednesday.

**The 411 on Joshua**

Lately, Joshua has been coming to the house with both boys and girls of his age.

He introduces them as his friends. But not so long ago he came with a girl called

Mira, whom he was quick to introduce to me as his girlfriend.

Seeing my consternation, he explained that this particular girl was his girlfriend

and he even showed her where to sit, before getting her snacks from the kitchen.

Joshua doesn’t do this for his other “general” friends.

About month later, he brought another girl called Rosa, introduced her as his girlfriend,

and told me he had broken up with Mira.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because she sucks.”

I know this expression means something unpleasant, and I didn’t expect Joshua

to use it to refer to a friend. Besides, I thought he was too young to use such words.

I let them have their computer games and later he escorted her out.

“Why did you break up with Mira?” I asked Joshua after he returned.

“Because she sucks,” he replied.

“What exactly do you mean by ‘she sucks’?”

“She doesn’t know computer games and she won’t listen to me when I teach her.”

**What he looks for**

“Is that all?” I persisted.

“Also, when I tell her to talk slowly because ‘my baby’ is sleeping, she won’t listen

and continues speaking loudly ... And when she does something wrong, she laughs

instead of saying sorry. One more thing; she cries a lot even over small things.”

(FYI: Joshua refers to Issa, his baby brother, as ‘my baby’. My efforts to correct

this have fallen on deaf ears.)

“So what’s good about the new girlfriend?”

“Mum, Rosa is cool! Also, she knows a lot of stuff and listens when I’m talking.”

This is a topic he didn’t want me to dwell on. Plus, he warned me that his father

and elder brother, Peter, should not know.

I hope Joshua will forgive me for exposing his “conquering” of members of the

opposite sex. I’m still lost for words though. I thought he was too young to think

along such lines. I’m now preparing to discuss with him how these girls qualified

from friends to girlfriends.

It’s my turn to start introducing a sentence or two regarding issues of sexuality

and HIV. Or is it too early?

This is the diary of Asunta Wagura, a mother-of-three who tested HIV-positive

23 years ago. She is the executive director of the Kenya Network