HIV/AIDS and Mental Health
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Mental health - emotional, psychological, and social well-being
• Mental health affects how you think, feel, and act
• Can determine how you handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Why is Positive Mental Health Important for People Living with HIV/AIDS?
  – function better at work, at school, and in relationships.
  – cope more effectively with life’s challenges; such as the death of a loved one, ending a relationship, job stress, health issues, and family or financial problems.
  – take better care of physical health.
  – maintain healthy balance
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• If you are living with HIV/AIDS, mental health problems can affect your physical health by:
  – Create barriers in medical adherence.
  – making it harder for you to keep your health appointments or take advantage of your support network.
  – interfering with your healthy behaviors, such as getting enough sleep and exercise and avoiding risk behaviors such as having unprotected sex.
  – impairing your ability to cope with the stresses of daily life.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• For persons living with HIV/AIDS, it is important for them to be aware that there is an increased risk for developing mood, anxiety, and cognitive disorders. These conditions are treatable. People who experience mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Possible signs of mental health issues are:
  – No longer finding enjoyment in activities which usually make you happy
  – Withdrawing from social interaction
  – Change in memory functioning
  – Sleeping too much—or being unable to sleep
  – Feeling “sad” or “empty” much of the time
  – Feeling guilty
  – Feeling tired all the time
  – Panic attacks
  – Having racing thoughts
  – Loss of sexual interest
  – Worrying what others are thinking about you
  – Hearing voices in your head
  – Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or others
  – Intense anger or rage toward others
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Most mental health problems are caused by a combination of family history and environmental, biological, and psychosocial factors.

• Some common factors include;
  – a family history of mental health problems and/or genetic factors.
  – stressful life events or psychosocial reasons, including trauma, sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and illness.
  – psychological factors such as unhealthy thinking patterns and trouble managing feelings.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Forms of stress can contribute to mental health problems for people living with HIV/AIDS, these can include:
  – Accessing services.
  – Loss of social support/isolation.
  – Loss of employment or worries about whether you will be able to perform your work as you did before.
  – Disclosure of status to others.
  – Managing HIV/AIDS medicine regiment.
  – Experiencing changes in physical appearance or abilities due to HIV/AIDS.
  – Loss, including the loss of relationships or even death.
  – Stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• *Antiretroviral therapy* also can affect mental health in different ways

  – **Pros**: Can relieve your anxiety because knowing that you are taking care of yourself can give you a sense of security

  – **Cons**: cause a variety of symptoms, including depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbance, and may make some mental health issues worse.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• The HIV/AIDS virus itself also can contribute to mental health problems.

• Some opportunistic infections (which occur when the immune system is damaged by HIV/AIDS) can affect the nervous system and lead to changes in behavior and functioning.
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• Depression
  – one of the most common mental health conditions experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS
  – more than just a feeling of being "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days
  – Brain disorder
  – Caused by genetic, environmental, psychological, and/or biochemical factors
HIV/AIDS and Mental Health

• How is depression treated in people who have HIV/AIDS?
  – Diagnosed and treated by a health care provider.
  – Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT),
  – Medication/ Antidepressants (Zoloft, Cymbalta)
  – People with HIV/AIDS and depression should talk with their health care provider about side effects, possible drug interactions, and other treatment options
This Is Just The Beginning

Questions
?

Thanks For Listening

Kerry C Johnson, Psy.D., LPC, NCC