Finding Voice

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Appendix

Making a Paper Prayer: Workshop Structure

We start with a question: for example, *Can art make a difference to a life?*

**Introduction**

If you know people who are dying of AIDS, is there something you can do? You hear statistics daily and know that there are 2,000 new infections in South Africa each day. Statistically, every fifth person in the room represents how many youth are infected. HIV is a treatable disease and a normal part of our life. We cannot deny it or pretend it does not affect us. This workshop is designed to help us break the silence about this issue. (*This can be adapted to another issue.*)

**HIV Workshop**

An interactive workshop follows the introduction with a discussion by a trained HIV counselor. (*The workshop can focus on myths, facts, and answer questions. The time frame varies from one hour to three days.*) After the discussion, we make an artwork in the form of a paper prayer.

**Purpose**

Think of a card you give to someone on their birthday, when they get married, or when they have lost someone. What is the message you want to share with that gesture? In a similar way, if you were to make a card for someone based on something you have heard in this workshop or a message you want
to give them, what would it say? Who do you have in mind: someone who is sick with AIDS, someone who you know has unprotected sex, someone you would like to support to get an HIV test, or someone who you can support to start antiretroviral treatment. Alternatively, you can use this workshop to make a gift for yourself about something new you have learned. (The message possibilities are numerous and depend on the purpose, audience, venue, and issue.)

Steps to Make a Paper Prayer Artwork (monoprint)

• Cut linoleum or plastic plates and paper to the conventional format of a paper prayer, in a rectangular strip. (Paper is approximately 10.5 cm × 30 cm.)
• Choose an object from a selection, such as a leaf, a flower, a piece of lace, netting, or a feather; or cut out a shape from paper, a word, or a letter to make your own stencil; or make a drawing on a sheet of paper. What colors do you want to use? For example, will you paint your leaf green or orange; is the leaf alive or changing? What does the feather mean to you? What is the symbol of the netting or of the candle you cut out? Does it represent a memory, or is it a symbol of hope, care, protection, or sadness?
• Think about the composition and where you want to place each object on your plate.
• Use the brushes, sponges, or rollers to cover your textures with a thin layer of ink (water-based). Cover the background of your plate in color using a sponge or roller. Consider if you want to divide the image or have more than one color. What do the colors signify to you?
• Place the (dampened) paper on top of your plate. Then print the image either by hand rubbing with a burnishing tool or, if there is a press, by running the plate under pressure to transfer the ink.
• Lift your print slowly by peeling it away from the plate. This is where magic happens. There is a “wow moment” that translates into an exclamation or smile that says, “I did not know I can do something this beautiful.”
• Make a second print by moving the objects around on your plate, or turn them over and print the “ghost” from the ink that remains. You can now repeat the process and make a third print for yourself or as a gift.
Concluding the Workshop

- The prints are strung on a clothesline with paper clips or clothespins to dry.
- In a circle, share the meaning of your paper prayer with the group; or write the meaning or message on another paper to attach to the back of your image.
- You should have at least three prints: one for you, one to give away as a gift, and one to leave for the campaign. The narratives and shared stories from the workshop are a very important component. This is the key to unlocking and naming a feeling or fear through a symbol or object. It can be held and witnessed, and it can be taken home and shared.

Impact of the Workshop

The two- to three-hour workshop is a tool—a catalyst and release. Each person feels empowered in that they have made a contribution to themselves and each other through sharing and owning. Many rural mothers have told me that they were unable to talk about sex to their children before the workshop but were able to use their paper prayers to share the lessons they learned and to explain how they would like their children to take responsibility. The AIDS Action program discussed in chapter 5 demonstrates overwhelmingly positive results where paper prayers were used among the women of the Phuman Paper groups, as one of the tools that helped them to break the silence about HIV/AIDS, participate in voluntary testing and counseling, and refer others to voluntary counseling and testing (VCT).