

Disclosing std status essay samples

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Relationships are hard. The divorce rate skyrockets yearly, alternative lifestyles such as gay marriage and polygamy/polygyny are under attack and more and more women are becoming single mothers. The work that goes into developing a long term, meaningful relationship necessitates that the relationship begins on a foundation of honest communication, and acceptance. Without these two selfless traits along with a willingness to struggle in the name of achieving a mutual goal, a relationship cannot work. Because we live in a society that does not value abstinence, the likelihood of contracting some type of STD/STI while engaging in unprotected sex is very high. “ By the time American adults get to age 35, 50% of them have/ have had an STD.” (STD Lecture Notes 1) I would never engage in risky behavior, however, the onus is also on the partner to be honest about their status. It is morally reprehensible to mislead a partner by omission about STD status. This is selfishly playing Russian roulette with another person’s life and should be considered a criminal offense. Before starting a sexual relationship with someone, the most responsible course of action would be to request medical documentation of their STD/STI status. Because it is a risk to the health of others, if I had an STD I would tell my partner within the first three weeks, before engaging in intercourse.

There are several types of STD’s/STI’s, some of them chronic and lethal, some curable. HPV is a common STI that affects both men and women, but for which symptoms occur only in women. “ About 79 million Americans, most in their late teens and early 20s, are infected with HPV, or about a quarter of the American population. Each year, about 14 million people become infected.” (Tavernise) Often women will contract this STI and it will

resolve itself within a year without them even knowing they had it, sometimes it can cause cervical cancer or genital warts. (Cdc. gov) The strains of HPV that cause genital warts or cervical cancer are different, and are also different from the strain that is benign and causes no outward symptoms. However, if a person has the HPV that causes cancer, it can take many years for the symptoms to show up. Women can only know their status by going to a doctor to get a pap smear. Men can transmit HPV from having unprotected sex with an infected woman. A man who has had unprotected sex should disclose this to his new partner right away so she can be sure to take precautions. Again, when individuals are not honest with each other, they can potentially affect not only the short or long term health of their sexual partner, but their partners continued existence. Therefore, it is unethical not to disclose STD/STI status.

Quite often people who have been responsible in their sexual practices can also be at risk. In my own experience with HPV, I have a friend who was married for a year and at her yearly doctors exam she was discovered to have HPV. At first she was angry with her husband, because he was only her second sexual partner in her life, but her doctor told her that HPV can remain dormant for years undetected, and that there is no way of knowing whether she contracted it from her current husband, or her first sexual partner. She said the doctor told her not to be worried her husband had cheated on her. By telling a partner early on – before sex – about STD status, I can better avoid contracting and potentially spreading these diseases. Epidemics of STI/STD's are started because of selfish and irresponsible habits of individuals only concerned with their own pleasure. In order to stop the

onslaught of public diseases, self-quarantines need to be imposed. This is the civic and moral stance to take. Before engaging in sex, I would require documented proof from a physician before engaging in a sexual relationship. Eliminating one-night stands and other risky behaviors will help to get rid of STD's, or at least greatly control them. The only 100% method of preventing STD is abstinence. Other preventive methods include safer sex latex materials – male & female condoms, dental dams, flavored condoms, gloves, finger cots. (STD Lecture Notes 2) Furthermore, health risks can be reduced by engaging in sexual practices that do not require penile-vaginal intercourse. Foreplay such as mutual masturbation, massage, and phone sex can all be stimulating – and safe. (Sexuality Education)

Some people might not tell their potential partner for fear of rejection or reprisal. After all, how do you tell someone, for instance that you have HIV? “The stigma that prevents many people with H. I. V. from disclosing their condition is not just unreasonable; it is bad medicine because it discourages people from being tested for the virus. And knowing one's H. I. V. status has immense benefits, in terms of early treatment and reducing transmission.” (Petrow) Over 1. 1 million people live with HIV. Though most new infections are among the gay/bisexual male population, transmission among straight individuals has also risen. ('The HIV/Aids Epidemic In The United States') HIV is spreading the fastest for people who are young, heterosexual, female and people of color. Why? People in these groups perceive themselves to be low-risk and therefore may not take safer sex precautions. (STD Lecture Notes 2) College students engage in risky behaviors out of the mistaken perception that bad things only happen to other people. As a woman, I am more

vulnerable to date rape, assault, and alcohol poisoning than men, and am certainly vulnerable to contracting STD's from partners who are promiscuous and not interested in committed relationships. Many women who contract STD's from an uncharacteristic one-night stand at a party may be ashamed to admit it to a boyfriend. In the same situation, I think I understand how it would feel to be judged. However, part of adulthood is accepting the consequences of our actions and thinking not just for ourselves, but also for the good of others. Integrity and honesty are vital not just for healthy relationships, but for healthy self-respect. I would not feel good about myself if I omitted that information from a boyfriend.

I have also heard individuals state that they will not disclose their STD/STI status to a potential sexual partner because they feel the information is private. To me, this does not make sense. In the days before the ADA made it illegal to discriminate against individuals with HIV by firing or refusing to hire them, I could maybe see how the privacy excuse could be used – in the professional arena. But not in the personal realm. Sex and romantic partnerships are among the most intimate behaviors humans engage in. The devaluation of sex to something public and commonplace is part of the reason STD's spread so rapidly – many people just do not place sex in the category of being an intimate adult behavior, but think of it as a casual recreation sport. There is an old Indian proverb, however, that states, “ The freedom to swing your fist ends at my nose.” (Quoteinvestigator. com) This means that an individual's freedom is restricted once his or her freedom affects someone else. The same goes with privacy. Privacy is justified only up to the point where that privacy has no infringement on the welfare of

another person. And not just their welfare, but again the welfare of every future sexual partner they have as well as their children and spouses who will also be affected by the results of them contracting serious conditions. When an individual with a virus like HIV, which is potentially lethal, engages in unprotected sex with a partner without first notifying that person, it is murder. For a person with HIV to not think it is the right of the person they are sleeping with to know that they could contract HIV means that individual is callous, selfish, and quite possibly sociopathic. If you are able to sleep with someone knowing that it is a potential death sentence for that person, that means you are simply using that person for your selfish reasons and you have no care for their life or the lives of the other people they will sleep with in the future. This is murder because you are deliberately using yourself as a deadly weapon. This is also not taking into account how they could potentially infect other individuals through sharing blood, breast milk, needles, etc. Therefore, there is no justifiable reason for me not to disclose STD/STI status to a potential partner before engaging in sex. Even if I was afraid by partner might not continue the relationship – that is their rightful choice and they have the right to make that decision. The information they need to make an informed decision about their life should not be withheld simply for selfish reasons. No one should be punished for the actions – or inaction – of another individual. STD's and STI's can be life threatening and they are certainly life altering. Engaging in unprotected sex is a risky behavior and contributes to spreading these diseases throughout the populace. The only way to avoid these conditions is abstinence, because even when in a committed, monogamous relationship a person can contract

something like HPV, an STI that can lie dormant for years. I believe I must disclose my status if I had an STD before engaging in sex because I have a duty to society to not deliberately spread these infections. I not only care about my health, but the health of others, and to omit from someone that I carry a potentially life threatening disease such as HIV should be considered manslaughter. By disclosing my status early in the relationship before sex, he can decide if he is in the relationship for the right reasons. If the relationship is about respect and friendship and genuine feelings or just about sex. Two people who actually care about each other should be able to find a way to have a healthy sex life if one partner has an STD or STI. Education, proper precautions and being up front is the best route to take. In this way, we can protect our health, the health of our partners and still enjoy a positive quality of life and fulfilling romantic partnerships.

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