TAKING CHARGE OF HIV: THE JOURNEY TO UNDETECTABLE
Welcome Rachel

Hello

It is good you and your aunt could come in today as I wanted to see you and chat about the viral load test we did last time.

If you remember, I explained we take your blood to measure the amount of the HIV virus, to see how well the medication is working.

Yes I remember, you told me that if the medication is working well my viral load should be low - low is good.

You said I should be aiming to have a viral load that is undetectable.
When HIV is 'undetectable' it means the HIV treatment is controlling the level of HIV in your body and it can't be detected in your blood. HIV hasn't gone away, but the treatment is keeping it under control so that it can't harm you or anyone else.

If your treatment is working well you can feel and look like everybody else. You'll have energy to achieve all that you dream of and the virus can't stop you.

So, the results we have today show that your viral load is above 1000. This means HIV isn't very well controlled by your medicines. If the medicines are doing their job, we would expect your viral load to be lower than this, ideally undetectable.
So I really wanted to chat with you about this result and see if you have any thoughts on why it might be high.

It can be a bit of a journey to get to the point where you have an undetectable result, but we want to help you get there.

Hmmm, well I’ve been trying really hard. I know it’s important and I want to be well. But I just don’t like taking the tablets.
I find it difficult to remember with everything else going on in life. But also, I feel ok.

It is hard to keep motivated when I'm not sick.

I try to help her but I leave for work early and only get home late.

I understand, many other people have similar challenges.
But as you know, you are healthy and strong because you have been taking your medicine so well. You need to keep this going to remain well.

Yes, I know. And I want that because I have big plans for my future.

Yes.

Ok, well we can help to make it easier. I will ask Sibo to chat with you to work out ways to help. Does that sound ok?
Hey Rachel, sounds like the results were a bit difficult today.

Don't worry, I know what it's like and I can help you to get there. What is the hardest part?

I just don't understand why I should take them all the time, when I look and feel healthy!

I hear you Rachel.

I've been taking ARVs for 10 years, I'm doing great now and my viral load is undetectable.
But it hasn't been easy, I also used to find it boring having to take them all the time.

And then I got sick which is not a good feeling, so I had to ask myself - why do I want to be well?

Why I want to be well?

You can do it.
What else, the nurse said sometimes you forget to take your medication?

If I am feeling well and have no rashes does it matter if I miss one day?

It is hard but it does matter and we just need to accept that we have medication as part of our lives and find a ways to make it easier. Imagine if you took it every day and then one day your VL said undetectable. I remember the first time I was undetectable it made all the hard work worthwhile and I knew I had my HIV under control. It was such a good feeling.

True that would be good. Ok I will talk to Aunty about keeping my medicines in the same place and reminding me every day. Thanks Sibo.

No worries that's what I am here for.