



# STIGMA

## **Our Experience of HIV-related Stigma & Discrimination 1987 to 2017**

Richard Boyle, Counsellor at HIV Ireland

National Conference on HIV and Stigma  
Dublin, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017

# 25 YEARS OF COUNSELLING

HIV Counselling has changed dramatically!

- **1990's:** Terminal Illness (→ *more compassion*)
- **Now:** Chronic Condition

**Stigma remains one of the  
biggest issues in HIV Counselling**

# WHAT IS STIGMA?

- Negative stereotype
- “A mark of disgrace or reproach”
- **PLWHIV** report that **how others judge them is one of their greatest barriers to a complete and satisfying life.**

# THE ENORMITY OF STIGMA

- 17% of PLWHIV suicidal vs. 4% of general population
- Personal relationships:
  - 2/3 fear rejection
  - 1/3 have experienced rejection
- 20% have experienced stigma from immediate family
- 18% have experienced stigma from health professionals
  - → judgemental attitudes
  - → inadvertent disclosure

# EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL STIGMA

## ▶ External:

- ▶ Friends, family, colleagues, doctors, employers, etc.

## ▶ Internal: (Self Imposed)

- ▶ Self judgment, Shame, Fear, Disgust, Hopelessness, Worthlessness
- ▶ Can result in depression, social withdrawal, overcompensation, not accessing medical treatment

# DISCLOSURE

- Intimate relationship with Stigma
  - No Stigma => disclosure not such a big deal
- Who/When/How to share HIV status
- Pre-HAART: Disclosure was involuntary
- Now: Disclosure is discretionary
- Objective:  
Find one's own unique position on the 'Disclosure Scale'

Private



Public

# REAL LIFE EXAMPLES OF STIGMA

- Relationships breaking up / Being disowned by families
- “My mother won’t hug or kiss me anymore.”
- Jobs being lost / not being offered
- Services being denied
- Friends disappearing
- Verbal and physical and online abuse
- Being run out of communities / Being blanked at the local pub
- Having to abandon studies
- Continuing to breastfeed in public
- Engaging in high-risk behaviours (self and others)
- “Take a Valium and go home and whatever you do don't tell your mother”

# IMAGES OF EARLY HIV PUBLICITY ...DID WE CREATE A MONSTER?





# EARLY HIV PUBLICITY



# MEDIA IMAGES



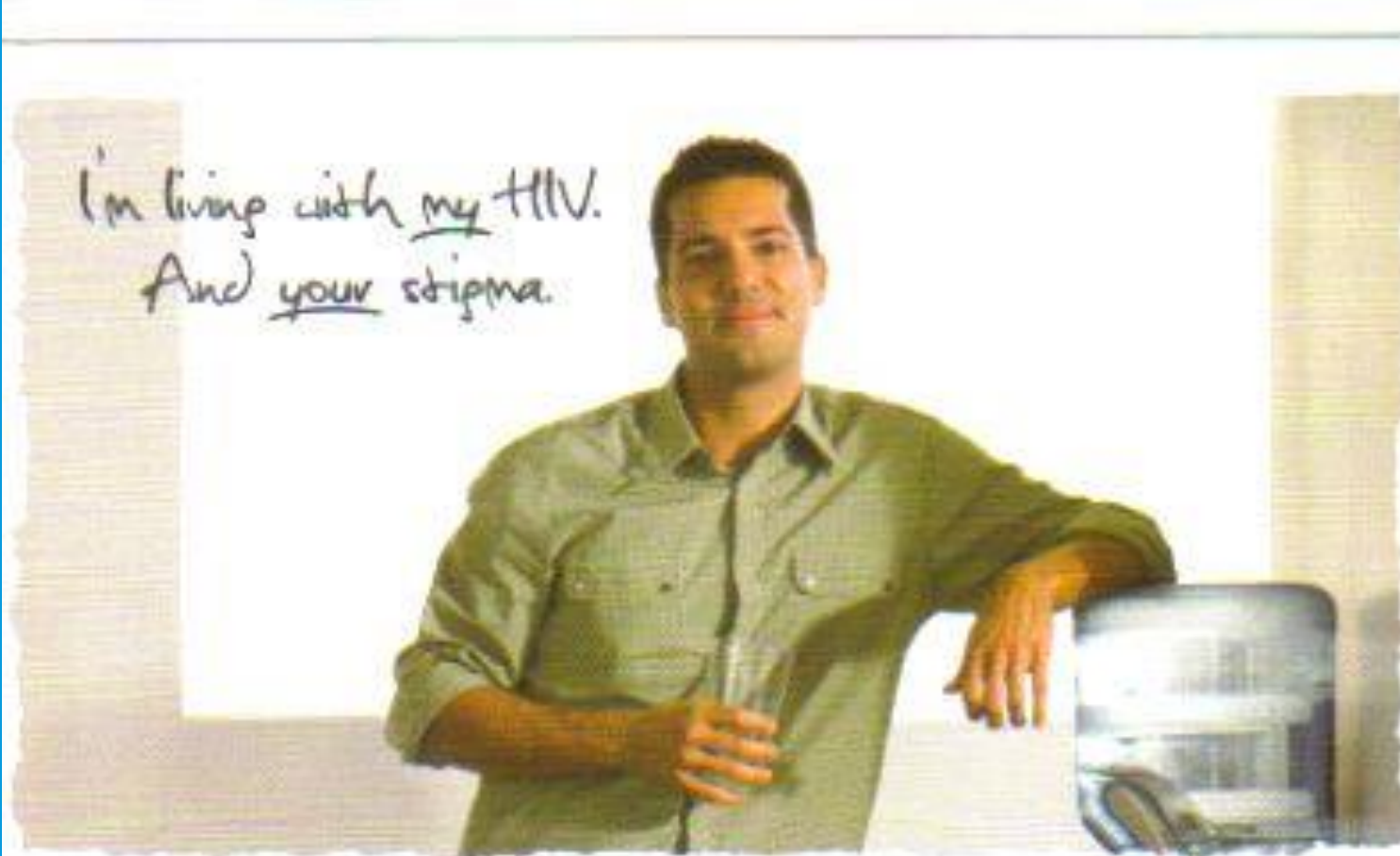


**DON'T GET AIDS.**

# CONTEMPORARY IMAGES




# CONTEMPORARY IMAGES



I'm living with my HIV.  
And your stigma.

[WWW.STAMPOUTSTIGMA.IE](http://WWW.STAMPOUTSTIGMA.IE)

 **STAMP  
OUT  
STIGMA**  
Challenging HIV and  
AIDS discrimination

**EVERYBODY HAS AN HIV STATUS. WE ARE ALL HIV EQUAL.**



**STATUS:** EXTREMIST

# Thank You!



**HIV Ireland**  
**01-873 3799**  
**[www.hivireland.ie](http://www.hivireland.ie)**  
**[richard.boyle@hivireland.ie](mailto:richard.boyle@hivireland.ie)**

STIGMA SUCKS!

Take your prejudice off, put the ribbon on.