

Pumla-

Pumla moved to the Western Cape from the Eastern Cape in 1998 because her 9 month old daughter was very ill and she did not have access to the proper treatment in her home town. She settled into one of the townships in August and found out that her young daughter was HIV+ in September. Pumla and her partner got tested together and they were both discovered to be HIV+ as well.

When Pumla was tested, she says that she had no idea what HIV was so she didn't worry about it. She had no knowledge of how the virus is acquired or what it does to your body so she does not recall feeling scared or worried. However, because her daughter was sick, she made regular trips to the Children's Red Cross Memorial Hospital in Cape Town. Her frequent visits enabled her to come in contact with other HIV+ mothers as well as gave her the opportunity to meet one of Wola Nani's counsellors, Daisy. Daisy spoke to Pumla about HIV and encouraged her to join one of Wola Nani's support groups. Pumla followed through with the advice and continues to attend on a weekly basis.

The support group not only provided Pumla with information about the virus, such as how it is spread, what it does to the body, and different steps one can take to improve the quality of life, but it also equipped her with coping skills and gave her a place to go to in order to find comfort and reassurance. Pumla's work with the income generation programme enables her to make enough money to put food on the table and send her daughter, who is now 10 years old, to school. She no longer receives support from the father because he passed away a few years ago. Pumla is also mother to a little boy, whom she gave birth to in 2005; he does not have HIV.

Pumla says that she likes to be open about her HIV and has disclosed to most of the people she knows. She says that too many people are untruthful and that it is best to be honest and upfront about HIV because you cannot tell who has the virus based on appearance alone. She recently broke up with her boyfriend because he didn't want anyone to know that they were HIV+; Pumla knew that she couldn't live a secret life so she separated from him. She feels that her decision to disclose her status has helped other people realize that the virus is not shameful and that it is possible to live a positive and happy life with HIV.