



POSITIVELY ALIVE

Barbara Kingsley



Based: Cape Town

Description: Motivational HIV+ Guest Speaker:

In December 2000 I was diagnosed HIV positive, which came as a complete shock to me, as the diagnosis was completely unexpected. For the next 8 years I lived in a place of what I like to call superficial acceptance or denial. I was quite comfortable to be HIV positive (or so I thought) provided that I didn't get ill. I thought I had it all worked out, when in fact I was simply being ruled by fear. I had no idea what ARV's could do; I had no one to turn to who could tell me what to do or which way to turn. I had support from family and a few friends who I disclosed to but no one who could really stand beside me and show me the way. As a result I nearly died. My cd4 counts ended up dropping to just 86 and I became extremely ill. Exhaustion became my faithful friend and simple daily tasks became insurmountable obstacles. I honestly believed that I was going to die. But I chose to fight. I fought so hard for my life and had no choice other than to face up to my worst fear, which was eventually getting ill one day. How was I to know how easily this could have been avoided? I didn't know then, but I know now.

Once commencing ARV treatment, I began to feel so much better, and I subsequently drew upon a new found strength that I never knew I possessed. I rose so high above my circumstances and began to speak out. With this new found energy that I had discovered, and the inner strength that I had found, I watched the comrades marathon that year on TV (2008). From nowhere, I acquired a burning desire to run. Not to run the comrades, mind you, who does that?? ☺ but just to run. Despite never having run before, and having no natural running ability I began to run slow 5kms. From barely being able to walk 100m when I was ill to running 5km was a miracle to me. I went from strength to strength and ultimately went on to successfully complete the Comrades marathon in 2013. I ran as an openly HIV positive runner to show what can be done. Running over the finish line will remain one of the most incredible moments of my life.

Part of my running journey was being affiliated to an NGO called Positive Heroes, co-founded by my hero, Evelina Tshabalala. Positive Heroes relies on the power of HIV positive role models and provides a platform for them to speak out about living positively with the virus. One of their initiatives was running on their ultra-marathon team, which I did for a

number of years. It involved 5 of us, all living with HIV, to openly run the major marathons and ultra-marathons in attempt to bring awareness and hope (we ran to name a few City to City 50km, Comrades 89km, Soweto 42km, Two Oceans Ultra 56km)

Part of our obligations as being on the team was to travel the country doing outreach from corporate and hospitals to the most rural schools and clinics in the townships. I have appeared in numerous magazines, newspapers, online magazines etc.

I have also been featured on various TV programs, but not limited to:

Dr Mole show – insert

Brothers for Life TV ad

Celebrities and HIV

All Life insurance ad – which is available on You Tube – I understand that the ad is still running on the SABC 1, 2 and 3 channels as well as E TV

I have been featured on live radio on various radio stations, but not limited to:

Bush Radio

PUK campus radio

Radio Metro

SAFM

Cape Talk

To name a few.

Some of the venues and audiences that I have been invited to address, but not limited to, and in no particular order, are:

HOPE Cape Town – Tygerberg Hospital – presented a talk to the Health Care Workers

Mothers to Mothers – Cape Town – presented a talk to their staff

Pathcare – N1 City – presented a talk to their staff

North West University Potchefstroom – presented a talk to the lecturers and a separate talk to the students – I understand the on campus HIV testing spiked after my talk!

**The Haven Night Shelter – Homeless Shelter in Cape Town
Western Cape Department of Labour – talk to the employees**

The Annual Red Ribbon Ball - Guest Speaker

Chris Barnard Memorial Hospital – talk to the doctors and staff

First year medical students at The University of Cape Town

Houses of Parliament – Cape Town - addressed staff and parliamentary representatives

Speaker at a Paediatric Workshop ahead of the World Aids Conference held in Durban last year – spoke to paediatricians, doctors, professors representing countries from all over the world

For more information or to book Barbara Kingsley contact:

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