



Health Promoters @ Home

“Children are our future and mothers are the guardians of our future”

The World Health Organization notes that ‘...the inequities of society are as damaging as other factors that affect the health and survival of women and children.’* These inequities are still affecting women in South Africa (SA), and they include inadequate education, restricted health care availability, and insufficient social grants. These disadvantages contribute to women experiencing minimal job opportunities, much disease and considerable poverty**. Highly patriarchal influences and violence compound women’s difficulties (SA statistics show that abuse and rape occur frequently, well above the global average). All this means that many SA women and children experience high levels of stress, low levels of self-worth, as well as feelings of helplessness, alienation and disempowerment.

It is for all these reasons that **Health Promotion South Africa Trust** uses an excellent programme called **Shine!** to help support and empower women of all ages to develop more self-respect, regain their dignity and have better health for themselves and their children. **Shine!** usually runs over the course of 8 weeks, one day per week, and has 4 major components. The components are:

- 1. Emotional Health** includes working through trauma and developing healthy ways of dealing with emotion, stress, abuse etc. Problem-solving skills and empathy for others are emphasized.
- 2. Physical Health** deals with health promotion and health management including an emphasis on healthy maternity, new-born and early childhood health as well as guidelines for breast-feeding.
- 3. Sexual Health** includes understanding, valuing and caring for one’s body, responsible birth control, healthy sexuality, and protection against sexually transmitted diseases.
- 4. Family Health** is about improving child development, parenting skills and improving care of the family.

The responses women have shown to **Shine!** are truly remarkable. **Mrs Lindiwe Mdidimba**, one of HPSA’s Senior Health Promoters, has facilitated **Shine!** for many years now, and when she tells you about it, she glows and shines herself with joy that the programme helps women in such remarkable ways! She comments: “*When they have done **Shine!** they have learnt to laugh again, before they were weak, now they are stronger, before they were discouraged, now they are full of courage! They have learnt to stand up for themselves; they have learnt to be strong for their families.*”

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Other HPSA facilitators agree with Lindiwe, saying that the changes in the **Shine!** Attendees are wonderful to see. Let some of the **Shine!** participants speak for themselves:

Nolsindiso Gqolo is physically challenged and she says that *".....for years I did not accept myself, I would hide myself away from everyone but after **Shine!** I learn to love and respect myself...to believe that I am wonderfully made....to believe in myself even if others don't. I am so thankful for **Shine!** and for Health Promoters teaching me for free!"*

Sizeka Msingizana comments: *"**Shine!** was such a wonderful opportunity to talk about women's issues. I had a big challenge; I couldn't face my community because I was stigmatized. I lost my confidence in myself, I was angry especially with men (she was abused), but **Shine!** this amazing programme done by Health Promoters, give me a different mind-set....I couldn't wait for each session...I get stronger.....we support each other!"*

Vuyiska Tshiska was abandoned by her family after an early teenage pregnancy and struggled to support herself and her daughter selling food by the road. The struggle felt hopeless as people manipulated her and took the money she earned, and she and her daughter often went hungry. She says *"I was very sad...I used to cry a lot. I was just accepting anything that happened to me... but when I did **Shine!** with Senior Health Promoter Lindiwe, I learnt to stand up for myself, to choose for myself, and to look after myself. I got a better job now and my daughter and I have happiness! I am so grateful for Health Promoters helping me like this!"*

*World Health Organization Report, 2005

**Statistics South Africa, 2014

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