Our home is where the heart is

A young homemakers’ guide

By Aini N. Hoaeb and Aune S. liyambula with Lucy Y. Steinitz, Ph.D.
About the authors

“Auntie” Aini Hoaeb and “Auntie” Aune Iiyambula are identical twin sisters who grew up in Namibia’s north-central area. As teen-agers, they became responsible for the day-to-day management of the household where they lived. Later, they trained as teachers, got married, and became mothers – each with two children of her own.

Aunties Aini and Aune got the idea to help child-headed households ten years ago, during a walk they took in the unspoiled nature around Ruacana. They have been spending much of their time with orphans and other children-in-need ever since. Auntie Aune became a senior regional school counsellor in Outapi, Namibia. Auntie Aini volunteers at a community-garden and soup kitchen for sixty children in Otavi, Namibia. More recently, they started running workshops for teenagers on household and family care, which they call the “Torch Bearers’ Project.” With the help of Yelula/U-khâi, they teamed up with Lucy Steinitz, an experienced writer and long-time community-activist for children in Namibia, to write this manual.

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Additional information about the technology for disinfecting water that is described herein can be found detail on web at www.thewaterschool.org or www.SODIS.ch. To learn more about toy-making without spending a lot of money, see It Costs Almost Nothing: Beneficial Indoor Games and Handicrafts from Rubbish and Recycled Materials by MaryBeth Gallagher and Marie Harlech-Jones (et al), Family Health International, Windhoek, Namibia, 2007 (www.fhi.org).
Aunties’ advice to guide young people on household and family care

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Managing a household is a hard job. It takes a lot of courage.

- Sarah, 17

This book is intended for children and youth who shoulder the responsibility of managing a home and caring for others. Although this book is primarily directed to child-headed households, we think all young people can benefit from it. It is also intended as a guide for community caregivers, volunteers and relatives who oversee these households, and who voluntarily assist the children as much as possible. Their dedicated help makes all the difference in the world. Without their support, many more young people would be forced into child-labour, criminal behaviours or prostitution.

We recommend that this book be accompanied by training or a support-group in your school or community – but it can also stand alone, to be read and re-read.
Dear Children,

As you know, it has become increasingly common in our society for children to head their own households and take care of other relatives, due to the death or illness of their parents and guardians, or because their parents live far away. Most often, this situation is caused by HIV & AIDS, which adds grief, mourning and sometimes stigma to the burden that child-headed households must bear.

In the past, when the head-of-household was always an adult, that person had been trained and prepared by elders to take on this responsibility. Aunties played an especially important role with young people by teaching them about what would be expected of them as adults, as caregivers of others. One benefit of this approach was that accepted customs and beliefs would continue seamlessly from one generation to the next.

But today things have changed. Usually, young people who have been forced to head households or take care of others have not been trained, and they are too young to take on the entire responsibility themselves. These young caregivers need the ongoing support of adult friends, relatives, and other community members.

This book serves as a guide with information that all responsible caregivers and all heads-of-households should know. We call it a Young Home-makers’ Guide because we believe that any household – from a poor shack to a large homestead – can become a loving home when it is run properly, with care and understanding.

Yours truly,
“Auntie” Aini N. Hoaeb and “Auntie” Aune S. Iiyambula
A family-head — also called a head-of-household — is a person who looks after the house and everything and everybody in it. Sometimes this happens as the person’s own choice, but sometimes that person accepts the responsibility just because there is no one else around who can do the job. Usually, a family head is an adult (often, an old person), but it can also be a child.

Being a head-of-household should not be undertaken lightly. The job involves your heart as well as your head; that is, it requires you to be passionate and caring in your commitment to help your relatives, as well as to be knowledgeable about doing what is right for your family.

We believe that family-heads need to love themselves and be willing to love those they care for. But we also realize that you need the love and support of others, and to that end we encourage you to find people whom you trust in your community who can provide you with assistance, as needed — good neighbours, teachers, church members, NGO-volunteers, and the like. This book is designed to help you with information and advice you will need, as part of your responsibility.

### 1.1 Good qualities of a head-of-household

As a good head-of-household, you need to understand how your family members work best together, and you must really care about your household — the people who live there, the history or heritage you share together, and also your property and anything else you own. As a good head-of-household, you must also listen well and lead by example, and you should have strong values and principles that help others and are practical.

Sometimes I don’t have anybody to talk to; then I write in my diary and pray to God.

- Generous, 17

The key is love and discipline. You need both to run a household.

- Generous, 17

Please keep your own dreams alive — they can still come true.”

- Auntie Aune and Auntie Aini

You are in charge now
A good head-of-household tries to make sure that all of the basic needs of his or her family are met. And what are these needs? Among the most important are love, food, shelter, clothes and security. Community resources are also needed, for example: being able to go to school, getting health-care if needed, and worshiping freely at your church of choice. Because this is a lot of work for just one person, your need to involve other family members in doing the work, and where possible, also neighbours, friends, and other community members. You should encourage teamwork, because working cooperatively as a family is the best way to succeed.

If you want to be successful, don’t look at your situation now, but rather look at your future.

- Lowisa, 14

1.2 Creating a family vision

What do you want your family to be like in two years, or in three? Picture in your mind how you want things to be – for example: Who will be going to school? Who will still living at home? Who should be working at a job or taking care of the farm-animals? How should things be different than now, and in what ways should they be the same? What do you want your role to be? And so on.

It may be a good idea to gather everyone together in your family who is old enough to discuss these issues, and then think through each of these questions in your minds. First, everyone should think through the questions individually, maybe by writing down their goals and ideas on a piece of paper. Then, as you discuss them together, you will see where you agree or where there are some differences. Talk about them together, and eventually you will find yourselves coming to an agreement about how you want things to be for your family, in two or three years’ time.

Your goals should be realistic and do-able. Talk about action-steps that will help your family reach its goals, and try to be as specific as possible about who should do what, how, and when. If you think it will help, ask a community worker or family friend to help you lead this discussion.

Every family is unique; meaning that what you decide is right for your family does not have to be the same as what another family decides is right for them. When your family has made its decision, however, write down what you have agreed upon, and that will become your family’s vision for the future. If you paste this vision on a wall, then everyone can read it frequently, and be reminded that this is your family’s idea for the future.

Be strong and never give up.

- Romeo, 12

Reading the vision frequently will also help you stay on track to reach your goals. If you want, you can also write down some of the action-steps you discussed. You and your family can also repeat the exercise in one or two years’ time or whenever you want, in order to continue your planning for the future.

1.3 Teamwork

Whatever your family vision is, make sure it includes teamwork. Teamwork binds family members together and helps everyone know and appreciate each other.

We spoke to a lot of child-headed households before writing this book and they said that, in order to live successfully, all family members must communicate well with one another, respect each other, and work together to help with housework and other chores. This includes both boys and girls, old and young. If someone is upset or angry, they should talk about it – not hold the feelings inside. We also heard how everyone in a successful household shares in the food or money that comes into the house, according to his or her needs. One child-headed household told us that, if they got bread, they always divided it into six equal parts because that is how many people they were. Even if there was one extra slice of bread at the end, that got cut into six tiny pieces so that everyone had the same.

Part of teamwork is sharing the good times together, not just the hardships. If someone in your household has a birthday, don’t forget to do something special as a family – even something...
simple, like playing that child’s favorite game, singing a song together, or letting the child off from chores on that day. The same can apply if a sibling gets a good report from school or succeeds at an after-school activity.

1.4 Being a role model

As the head-of-household, you are a role model to others. What you do, eat, drink, and where you spend your time speaks louder than any words you can say. In addition, who you are is what your family is likely to become. That means that your younger brothers and sisters are likely to copy what they see you doing, more than what they hear you saying. So, it is important to know that every action you do becomes a wheel that pulls your family-wagon. If you do something harmful or unwise, it can push your whole family into the ditch. Being caring and taking smart actions can move your family forward to reach your vision.

As a head-of-household, you can be a hero every day. This happens when:

- You act the talk and not talk the act.
- You listen actively to others and show that you care.
- You are courageous.
- You say “Yes we can” even when something looks very hard or impossible.
- You say “No!” when that is the right response for yourself or your family.
- You show that you respect yourself and others around you.
- Your shoulders are ready to be leaned-on by those who feel weak, and your arms are open to comfort those who feel distressed.
- You realize that you don’t have to be perfect.

1.5 Children’s rights

Namibia’s Constitution, National Plan of Action (NPA), Third Medium-Term Plan on HIV & AIDS (2005 – 2009), and National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children spell out the rights of Namibian children to attend school and live a decent life. Many of these principles are also contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Namibia is a signatory. Knowing your rights helps you advocate for support with government representatives and other community leaders.

Children in Namibia have many rights. Enforcing them is everyone’s responsibility:

1. All children have a right to attend school, which in Namibia includes a free primary education as written in the Namibian Constitution (even for those who can’t pay school development funds). Under certain circumstances, secondary school is also free, according to Ministry of Education policy.
2. All children have the right to official documentation – such as their birth certificate, parents’ death certificates - that is necessary to access government services and support.
3. Children should enjoy adequate standards of living, sufficient for their basic needs. This may vary depending on where the child lives, but it should minimally include safety and protection, decent shelter, clothes, and sufficient food for their nutrition and development.
4. Orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers have a right to government support, where eligible. This generally comes in the form of a Social Welfare Grant (i.e. specifically, a foster care, maintenance, or disability grant) from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.
5. All children should have access to HIV/AIDS prevention education, information, and to the means of prevention. (Measures should be taken to remove social, cultural, political or religious barriers that may get in the way).
6. Children have the right to confidentiality and privacy with regard to their HIV status, the same as adults. This also means that HIV testing should be voluntary and, where reasonable, done with the informed consent of the child involved. An HIV test should only be conducted with pre-test counselling. If a child’s legal guardians are involved, they should respect the child’s view if the child is of an age or maturity to have such views.
7. No child should be discriminated-against in any activity because of his or her HIV status.
8. Children have the right to access all needed health care services, even if they can’t pay. In Namibia, HIV-related treatment is free and for other services the social worker or matron should be approached (in accordance with Ministry of Health and Social Service policy) if the family has no money for the hospital or clinic fees.
9. Children have the right to be heard and the right to participate in decision-making that concerns their wellbeing, now or in the future. Their ideas and opinions should be taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity.
10. At all times, important decisions should be made in “the best interest of the child,” even if that may not be the easiest or most convenient thing for others to do.

If you think that some of your rights are not being met, or that of other household members, you should contact a government social worker, community-leader, or non-governmental organization. Contact information can be found at the end of the last chapter of this book.

1.6 Children’s responsibilities

Children living in Africa have special responsibilities that go along with their rights. This is because African values are unique and need to be addressed properly.

All children should be responsible towards their family, society, country, and international community. Children’s responsibilities are closely tied to their age and ability. A Namibian child has the responsibility:

- To bring love and peace to his or her family through good behaviour
- To respect and assist his or her parents, elders and other children
- To be on time and to be punctual
- To treat men and women – boys and girls – equally, and with respect
- To avoid using abusive language
- To refrain from quarrelling with others
- To protect his or her property and that of others
- To preserve and strengthen cultural values in his or her relationship with others, so long as these values do cause harm to anyone
- To preserve and strengthen the independence, national unity and integrity of his or her country.

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1. These documents are available in many local languages and are available through various government offices, such as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Social Services, and the Office of the President.
When there is no meat and just a bit of food, make soup and add salt.”

- Elifas, 16

No one expects you to take care of everything at once. Start with the basics and try your best to set the example that others in your house can follow. You can ask a trusted neighbour, relative, or community member if you are not sure what to do.

2.1 Good hygiene

Many people say, “Prevention is better than cure.” Good hygiene refers to the practice of keeping your home and your body clean, in order to prevent sicknesses and diseases. It also involves handling food safely, keeping unclean animals out of the house, properly, and going to the nearest health facility when someone had an accident or is sick and not getting better.

Every family should also establish a routine about cleaning the house, washing the dishes, and so on. Collectively, your family must decide who should do these things, and when, and how. If you can, get everyone involved and rotate the duties, so that no one is responsible for doing the same thing, all alone, all the time. Even young children can help: this will teach them about the routines and get used to them.

2.2 Food

Good food helps bodies healthy and strong.

If people are hungry or children are poorly nourished, better nutrition (meaning, good and healthy food) must be your first concern. Try to balance your family’s diet by including a variety of healthy foods every day. Avoid fast-foods from the shops, or foods that are very sweet or very fatty. Sugar may taste good, but it is made up of empty calories that do not provide any benefit to the body.

The main food your family eats usually provides most – but not all – of the body’s energy and other nutritional needs. In Namibia, the main food is usually mahangu (millet) or maize. In addition, you should try to add helper foods every day: these include energy-helpers such as oils, butter, nuts, and seeds; vitamin and mineral helpers such as fruits and vegetables; and proteins or body-building helpers such as beans, lentils, groundnuts, and animal products (meat, milk or eggs).

See Chapter 7 for what else you can do if someone is ill.

ADDITIONAL TIPS ON HYGIENE

• Always wash your hands with soap when you get up in the morning, after a bowel movement (that is, going to the latrine or toilet), and before eating.

• Bath often – every day when the weather is hot. Cleaning your body prevents skin irritations and infections. Babies and sick persons should also be bathed every day. Using soap is good, but you don’t need a lot of soap to stay clean.

• If young children have a bowel movement near the house, clean it up at once. Teach them to use a latrine or toilet, or at least to go farther away from the house.

• In areas where there are biting insects, hookworm or a lot of trash, do not go barefoot. If you cannot afford shoes for everyone, you can cut-out sandals from old tyres and tie them with string.

• Make sure everyone brushes his or her teeth every day and each time after eating sweets. If you do not have a toothbrush and tooth paste, use a twig from a tooth-brush tree or rub your teeth with salt and baking soda.

• Keep goats, pigs and other animals out of the house and away from where children play.

• De-louse your whole family often, if needed.

• Use a handkerchief or cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and teach others in your family to do the same. Also, do not spit on the floor as this carries germs.

• Clean your house often – sweep and wash the floors, walls, and underneath the furniture. Fill in cracks and holes where bedbugs, cockroaches, and scorpions can hide.

• Be sure your latrine (toilet) is clean and well-aired.

• Food should be stored properly. Expired, moldy, or spoiled food should not be eaten, as this can be very dangerous. (Expired food, means food that is served after the “best by” date that is printed on the bottom of many store-bought boxes or cans.)

• Refuse should disposed-of via the municipal refuse pick-up system, or safely burned.

• Drink clean water only (see below).

• Only eat food that has not spoiled, and only eat meat that is well-cooked.

• People with tuberculosis, flu, colds or other infectious diseases should not use the same utensils and plates as other people in the family. (This does not apply to people with HIV).

• Sick people should sleep in their own bed (or on their own mat), and if they are infectious, then they should sleep in a separate room if possible.
All of us would like to have at least three meals a day, but as you know, that is not always possible. Try to spread out the food you have so that everyone can eat at least once a day, preferably twice or even more. Pay special attention to young children, who should be given smaller amounts of healthy food five times during the day, if possible. Good food prevents malnutrition, that is often most severe in young children.

If you own or have access to some land, you should try to grow as much of your own food as possible. Homegrown food is cheaper and often more nutritious than what you can buy in the store.

Don’t smoke and avoid alcohol, including traditional brews. These are unhealthy and expensive and can lead to illness and an alcohol dependency. Drinking alcohol can also lead you to take risky behaviours that can cause an unwanted pregnancy or HIV.

Planning and storing your food:

You must plan carefully for your family to live on the food you have preserved from one season to the next, until there is another harvest. Good planning is also necessary if you must wait from one payday to another, at the end of each month. It is important for you to know when next you are likely to get food into your household, so that you can make these plans accordingly.

If you are not sure about how to preserve or process certain foods, ask your neighbours, friends, or traditional authority. Do not eat a lot of food at once thinking that you are eating for the next few days. All food eaten in one day is digested on that same day, so that by the next morning your stomach will again want more food. Also, don’t be tempted to throw away any food you have, just because you may have something new or better.

Party on the days that you have extra food should be avoided, because you should be preserving that food for hungrier times ahead.

When you get new food, do not mix it together with the food you already have. Keep it separate. When preparing your meals, use up the old food first (unless it has already spoiled). The reason is that if you prepare the new food before the old food is finished, by the time you get to the bottom of your storage the old food will have gone completely bad and you will have wasted it.

Food should be kept away from direct sunlight, excessive heat, moisture, and rain. Food should not be stored in rusting containers, nor in containers that were used for chemicals as this can cause food poisoning.

Always think about the value of your food before you exchange it for some other items. For example, exchanging two kilos of maize meal for an ice cream cone or a cup of sweet milk would be a waste on your side. Make sure you exchange food for the things you need, not just for the things you want. You can live a good life even if your wants are not met, so long as you have the things you really need.

You can save food by:

• Cooking only enough for the day or serving.
• Cooking one type of food for the whole family instead of cooking different types of food for each person.
• Baking your own bread, rather than buying it from the shop.
• Storing all leftovers carefully.
• Giving leftovers that are not suitable for human consumption to dogs or other pets instead of burying or burning the leftover food. Do not give rotten food to ducks as this can kill them.
• Reducing daily meals when food is scarce, so that you can still have something for the next few days instead of finishing everything all at once.

If you find it difficult to consistently feed your family, ask for help from someone in your extended family, your traditional authority, a community volunteer, or a government social worker at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, and/or a community volunteer. You can also try to produce some of your own food by planting maize or mahangu, raising small farm-animals such as chickens or rabbits, or cultivating a kitchen garden.
2.3 Clean water

If you draw water from a well or an open source like an oshana or river, you need to get rid of harmful bacteria, ecoli and viruses before drinking it. (Water that comes from a municipal tap in Namibia has already been purified before it gets to you.) The way many people currently clean their water – if they do it at all – is by purchasing purifying chemicals from a local shop, or else by boiling the water before consuming it. Both of these are expensive and boiling water also destroys the environment by using up wood.

The solution lies above you, using the sun, whose ultra-violet rays can do the cleaning for you. To use this method, you need transparent plastic bottles of 2 litres or less plus one corrugated metal sheet. That’s all

**Note:** Cleaned cool-drink bottles are fine, as is the corrugated metal roofing of a house.

2.4 Developing and maintaining good family routines

Routines are customs and or family ways-of-doing-things that often come from long ago. They answer the questions of Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How? Once you get into the practice of doing them right, then it becomes much easier to maintain good family routines over the long run.

Routines include the times set aside for eating, sleeping, studying, visiting others or having other visitors to your household. It includes family-rules about chores, helping each other out, and managing household affairs. Not having routines in place can result in a chaotic household and destructive life styles. Every family member should know that discipline and self-control are needed, and are the mother of lasting success!

If you already have family routines in place from your parents or guardians and you feel they are still appropriate, then follow them. This continuity will be helpful, because everyone will feel that your parents’ or guardian’s influence is still valued and important. If you need to change the routine, however, then get everybody together to agree on the change. (These gatherings are often called “family meetings.” In many households, anyone can call one to discuss something that he or she feels is important.)

Changing or establishing new family routines often requires a lot of encouragement, patience and hard work. It helps if everyone wants to make them happen – that is, when everyone takes “ownership” of the idea. We have already suggested that you can sit together in a family meeting to put together a schedule of everyone’s chores and agreed-upon routines, and then hang this on the wall for all to see.

Using hints and tips

5 EASY STEPS TO CLEAN WATER

**STEP 1**
Get the mud and dirt out of the water first. This means that, if the water is opaque (muddy), then you must wait until it is clear by letting the mud settle overnight at the bottom of a pan, or by filtering the water through a dense cloth to catch the mud-particles. It should be clear enough that you can count your fingers on the other side of the bottle, when you fill it with the water.

**STEP 2**
Wash the plastic bottle well and fill it to the top.

**STEP 3**
Place the bottle horizontally on the iron-sheet roof or on a table with a corrugated metal covering. This allows the sun’s rays to reach the bottle from all sides. The bottle should be exposed to the direct sun (no shadow).

**STEP 4**
Keep the bottle in the sun for 1 sunny day (at least 6 hours) or 2 full cloudy days. Rainy days don’t count.

**STEP 5**
Drink the water!

Doing this with several bottles at one time will give you enough drinking water for everyone in the family!
As the head-of-household, however, your leadership will still be needed to manage the everyday schedule (for example, wake-up times in the morning) and make sure that everyone understands the household rules and follows them properly.

**You don’t have to be perfect. Just try your best.**
- Dameona, 14

### 2.5 Being as self-sufficient as possible

Many child-headed households with whom we spoke told us how important it is for them to be self-sufficient – that is, to rely on their own resources as much as possible, and not always ask for help from neighbours or other relatives. They said that, because everyone could see that they tried to rely on their own resources as much as possible, when they really did need help then their neighbours and relatives were more likely to assist them. They had their own kitchen garden, saved money where they could by eating only traditional foods, and always worked together as a team. They avoided alcohol and smoking, as these are expensive and turned their attention away from the family. They also looked for opportunities to earn a bit of extra money, where possible.

What are some of the ways that you might be able to generate some income or support, part-time? Perhaps you can bake bread and sell it, offer to help in a neighbour’s field in exchange for food, or work at a shop over the weekends. In order to work at a job, however, Namibian law requires you to be at least 15 years of age. Whoever hires you should also treat you fairly -- don’t allow yourself to be exploited (taken advantage-of) just because you are young and need the money. Moreover, you should remember that no matter how old you are, your education should come first, as that will determine your long-term future.
I was left alone with my little brother when he was 3 years old. I didn’t know what to do and cried all the time. But now my brother is 5 years old and he calls me his mother. That makes me feel proud.

- Estelle, 15

As a head-of-household, your main responsibility is for the care and well-being of your younger brothers and sisters. We have already addressed basic issues around hygiene, food and water. What else is there?

3.1 Physical needs
The physical needs include food, clothes, shelter, school materials, and toys. Let others know that well-looked after items do not wear out quickly and this saves money. You don’t have to buy everything at a shop – you may be able to grow some of your own food and use traditional toys that are made from things you find around the house.

Keeping things clean – including your own body – is important, too. Older siblings can wash themselves, and they can help you wash the younger ones.

They can also help clean the house. Everyone should take turns doing this, not just the girls! Remember that clean bodies ensure healthy minds that function better at school and don’t get sick so easily!

If you are not able to meet a certain need, be honest in explaining why, and see if other household members have any good ideas about what can be done to meet this need in the future.

3.2 Spiritual needs
Your spiritual needs refer to your relationship with God, attendance at church (or mosque or temple) and your religious or moral values, including your understanding of “right and wrong.” It may be easier overcome life’s challenges, including the illness and death of loved ones, when your religious or spiritual needs are fulfilled.

Religious and spiritual beliefs can also provide comfort and guidance to people when they have to face tough choices. Several of the children we interviewed for this book described God or Jesus as a constant companion who helps them find meaning and hope. They also said they are less likely to drink alcohol or pursue high-risk behaviours because they know that God is watching what they do.

It is important to re-enforce your family’s spiritual connection, and to help them maintain their religious beliefs and moral values. As a family you need to pray together, offer thanksgiving, read the Bible together (or other Scriptures), and participate in your church choir, Sunday school, and/or youth group. Involvement in your church can also give you important contacts (people that you know) to call on for advice or support in case of an emergency.

Another reason to focus on spiritual needs is that if you don’t, someone else out there may try to fill the gap – and that can be an influence that you don’t like but will be hard to reverse. If you notice any changes in the belief or worship among your family members, be patient. Show them love and care, and continue to provide good guidance based on the Truth of your religion. For assistance, try to involve other family members, religious leaders or trusted friends.

At all times, try to maintain a good relationship with your spiritual parents (for example, your god-parents and others who provide support) and with religious leaders. Treat them with respect. Even if you don’t have any food or drink to offer them, you can invite them to your home or else you may ask to visit theirs. Be open to their input: Tell them about your brother or sister, the challenges you face or important decision you want to make, and then listen carefully to their response. They may know something that is important, that you haven’t thought about yet.

My advice is never give up. Look after yourself and your little sisters and brothers, remember you can always count on God for help.

- Linekela, 14

“Look after yourself and your little sisters and brothers, remember you can always count on God for help.”
CHAPTER 3

Caring for your siblings (and yourself)

3.3 Social needs

Everyone needs some time off during the week, just to relax and have fun. Be careful to discourage bad habits, however – such as alcohol and drug abuse, stealing, orgies, and gang involvement. Don’t waste your money on discos or expensive entertainment. Also remind others that school-work and household responsibilities come first – before we take time out to meet our social needs.

Remember that young children need appropriate supervision by a responsible older sibling, neighbour or friend. Putting a six-year-old in charge of a young baby is not good for the 6 year old or the baby, especially if the children are tempted into some bad or dangerous behaviours, or if an accident occurs.

3.4 Education

People often say, “Education equals success.” It is important to encourage your family to prioritise education – even for those who may feel that they are not very good at school. Most of the young people with whom we spoke from child-headed households said that continuing their education is the most important thing they can do for themselves and their siblings, and it is also what their deceased parents and relatives wanted for them.

Don’t quit school – or let any of your siblings quit – just because you don’t have money for the school fees (also called, the “School Development Funds”), or for a school uniform and supplies. If you are facing this problem, talk with the principal or someone from the School Board first, as they may be able to help you. In addition, you can approach your church, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), or a social worker from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for assistance. With proof of your situation (for example, family documents such as birth and death certificates, and/or letters describing your home-situation from community leaders), the school fees can be reduced or eliminated. Sometimes, it is better for a child to live in a hostel while she or he attends school, and this can also be arranged.

Too often, we hear about talented teenagers dropping out of school because they think they can have a career in music or sports, or because they heard about a job somewhere where the money is good. But then something doesn’t work out for them, and they end up with nothing. Caution the young ones against these ideas. Advise them never to put all their eggs in one basket – meaning that they should not put all their focus, strength and interest in one thing only – because if the basket breaks, then their future will be very difficult.

At the beginning of each school year, be sure to let the teacher, principal, and others at the school know about your situation at home – specifically, that you are in charge of the household and should be contacted if the school has any questions or concerns. (If there is a relative or neighbour who can do this for you, be sure to give them that information, too.) Other academic needs that require your attention are:

- Making sure that all school-age children are enrolled in school. This refers to all children under the age of 16, and preferably older children through grade 12 or at least grade 10. (This includes you, if applicable)
- Making sure that all school-age children attend on time, every day. Regular attendance is critical!
- Getting the proper school uniforms and supplies. If you do not have funds for this, ask a family member or community leader to help, or seek assistance at the school or with a local church or Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO).

Don’t worry if other children try to bully you. Just believe in yourself and you will make it

- Koes, 15
3.5 Dealing with death and grieving

Children and adults deal with death differently. A child’s reaction depends on his or her age, on how much the child understands, and on how supportive other people are to that child’s needs.

Here are some of the reactions you or your younger brothers and sisters may have:

- Young children may not realize that death is permanent, and they may expect the person to come back, even after you try to explain that this is not possible. They may ask the same questions over and over, trying to understand.
- Children may want to know a lot more about illness and what caused the death of their mother or father, and they may have lots of questions about what happens to a person’s body and soul after death.
- Sometimes following a death, children will become very attached to other members of their family and become afraid when these family members leave them — even if they are only going into town for a day.
- Children often just want things to be as normal as possible. They want their life to be as it used to be. They want to laugh and have fun, even if only for a short time.
- Children may have difficulty crying or they may cry all of a sudden. Remember that crying is not just for girls, and crying is natural, appropriate, and helpful for the healing process for everyone.
- Children may often react in anger and become rough with their toys, with animals, or with other children. They may become sad and moody and have trouble sleeping. It is best to help the child talk about his or her feelings — or put them down on paper in drawings or a diary.
- Children may feel that somehow the death of their loved one was their fault. They should be reminded that nothing they did or said could have caused that person’s death.

And just because that person died does not mean that all the other people they love will die as well.

Often young children do not like long talks. They just need to know that you are there to listen and that they can come to you if they feel like talking. They may need a lot of reassurance, especially at night or if they are feeling sad or lonely.

Try to remember the happy times you had with the person who has died. Remember that your loved one would not want you to stop living your life. That person surely wanted you to live positively and plan for your future, even though he or she is no longer with you.

3.6 Ongoing emotional needs

In some cultures, children are discouraged from talking about their deceased relatives. But this is not helpful. Children want to remember their loved ones, and they want others to remember them, too. It is better to create an open atmosphere where memories and feelings can be shared. For example, you may look at photographs or light a candle for your deceased parent on holidays, or on that person’s birthday. When other relatives come to visit, you can also ask them to tell you stories about the person who died.

Unfortunately, even if you do these things, you can’t always protect yourself or your siblings from feelings of sadness, loss, stigma, or anger. Then, it becomes an issue of dealing with the feelings, and coping the best you can. Some of the suggestions we heard from other children in your situation are: listen to your siblings’ concerns; acknowledge their feelings; and patiently try to answer their questions. In addition, you can encourage your siblings to pray, draw a picture of how they feel, or keep a diary (and you can also do these things for yourself).

With your help and understanding, you and your family members will feel more positively and better-able to solve the problems you face.

If you or your siblings continue to feel very sad or angry over a long period of time, however, you should approach a school counsellor or an NGO like Lifeline/Childline or Philippi Namibia for assistance. You can also talk to a person you know, whom you have observed as a good parent. Ask for practical advice from that person, for example about helpful ways to relate to children who are behaving badly or having emotional problems or doing poorly at school. In addition, here are two exercises you can try that might help:

- Even though my mother is in heaven, I talk with her every night. Sometimes I can feel her answering me. She guides me to make the right decisions.
  - Rosetta, 13

- With thanks to Constantine Bobst, University of Namibia, 2007
3.7 When siblings misbehave

All behaviour occurs for a special purpose. Each of us tries continually to find a place to belong, to maintain a place of significance. But what should you do when siblings fight with each other, or you keep trying to help a brother or sister who repeatedly ignores you, gets angry, or misbehaves?

In these situations, it is best to talk with the child or children involved, to find out why they are acting this way, and what is bothering them. Together, you may be able to solve the problem. Look for opportunities to say something positive to your sister or brother—possibly offering praise or recognition about his or her appearance (for example, “I see you cleaned yourself nicely”) or about something he or she did well (for example, “You did a good job cleaning up the yard” or “From the way you helped with dinner, I can see you will become a good cook one day”). You can also follow the suggestions below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four goals of misbehaviour and how to respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A child that whines a lot</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child doesn’t get enough attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop giving negative attention. Give attention only when the child behaves well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A constant clown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child seeks attention even if it is negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give quality attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A lazy child</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying things over and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on positive behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A nuisance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use “time out”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attention
The desire for attention is almost universal among young children. Children prefer to gain attention in useful ways, but if that doesn’t work, they will resort to negative behaviours.

Aunties’ advice to guide young people on household and family care
### Four goals of misbehaviour and how to respond

#### Power

Power-seeking children feel they are significant only when they are boss. They only want what they want. Even if you succeed in subduing them, the victory is only temporary. You may win the argument, but lose the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I see</th>
<th>What I feel</th>
<th>What I must understand</th>
<th>What I can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child who tells lies</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Child in a power struggle with me</td>
<td>Refuse to fight. Explain that you will continue the discussion at another time when everyone is calmer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child who does not want to listen</td>
<td>Feel challenged, disrespected</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Withdraw from power struggle. Continue the discussion at another time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child talks back and who argues</td>
<td>Like I want to hit the child; I fight or give in.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Negotiate with the child; listen and empathize, but be clear that there must be give-and-take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong-willed child</td>
<td>Exhausted, beaten</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Talk over the incident at a later stage; Give choices that are acceptable to you. Negotiate beforehand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Revenge

Children who pursue revenge are convinced they are not loveable. They feel that they are significant only when they are able to hurt others (often, as they believe they have been hurt themselves). They find a place by being cruel and disliked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I see</th>
<th>What I feel</th>
<th>What I must understand</th>
<th>What I can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child that hurts or bullies others</td>
<td>hurt</td>
<td>Child is taking revenge for something that happened to him or her</td>
<td>Stay Calm. Look for other opportunities to give positive reinforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child who gets others back</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A revengeful child</td>
<td>Sorry for myself</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Don’t feel pity for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A destructive child</td>
<td>Angry: wanting to get back at child</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Don’t blame yourself. Give affection to the child even if the child reacts negatively. Believe the child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Four goals of misbehaviour and how to respond

**Inadequacy** – Feeling “not good enough to do anything”
Children who display inadequacy or pretend to have an illness or disability are extremely discouraged. Since they have given up, they try to be excused for their behaviour by displaying inadequacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I see</th>
<th>What I feel</th>
<th>What I must understand</th>
<th>What I can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A withdrawn or paralyzed child</td>
<td>Discouraged and inadequate myself.</td>
<td>Child feels bad about her/himself</td>
<td>Find opportunities for positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A loner</td>
<td>Wanting to give up</td>
<td>Child has given up</td>
<td>Don’t criticise; find opportunities for positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child who feels pity for self</td>
<td>Hopeless; that nothing works</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Don’t give advice; try to interest the child in other activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has no energy</td>
<td>Feeling drained</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Focus on child’s strong points; Encourage child’s efforts; Use behaviour reinforcements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the misbehaviour persists or becomes very serious, you should refer the child or children to a counsellor at the child’s school or to an NGO like Lifeline/Childline or Philippi Namibia.

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**Together you may solve the problem.**
**CHAPTER 4**

**Caring for your house and land**

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**Don’t get into the habit of eating mahangu without pounding it first, because it makes you lose your dignity.**

- Katrina, 16

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The most important issue concerning your house and land is, do the best you can to preserve what you have, and don’t make any decisions about selling or giving away your possessions until you have consulted with others. Seek assistance from your local headman or chief, or from a trusted relative or legal councilor, if someone tries to take away what is rightfully yours.

Sometimes family members may try to take your land or house for themselves, saying that you and your siblings are “just children” who can’t manage things properly.

If this is happening to you, you should go to your local headman, or if he (or she) is not proving helpful to you, then go to a senior headman or to the Traditional Authority office. You can also approach a local NGO or the Women and Child Protection Unit.

In a town or city, you may also be in danger of losing your house if you can’t pay the taxes, or your water and electricity bill. Try to avoid this situation by paying off a little at a time, if you can. But if that doesn’t work, you should ask for help from your local councilor, or from the Mayor’s office, or a local NGO.

**4.1 Decision-making and agreements**

Avoid making decisions when you are angry, depressed, hungry or feeling desperate. You will likely regret the decisions you took when you were not in a good mood – but then, it may be too late. Beware of deceit and bribes, for example, when someone promises a reward for making a certain decision or signing certain documents. Usually, these promises turn out to be a mistake. If you can see that your relatives sincerely care about the well-being of your family, be sure to involve them in any agreement or important decision you intend to make. This way they will support you, once the decision is made.

They may also have information and ideas about things you don’t know. Take your time: rushing into a decision can be risky.

If your mother or father wrote a will before she or he died, you should ask to have a copy of it (or better yet, the original), as that may make it clear who owns what property, and things like that. In case something is still not clear, ask your Traditional Authority or local Councilor, or a legal practitioner (for example, at the Legal Assistance Centre).

Always have contracts or agreements in writing and keep a copy. It is good to have an expert you trust look them over before you sign them. Use other people as witnesses, but make sure that they haven’t been bribed beforehand. Then, keep an original copy for yourself, and make another copy for safe-keeping. Do not accept the suggestion that someone else will keep these documents for you, even if that person says, “They will be fine” or “They are safe.”

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When parents become sick, they should start preparing their children for the future. They shouldn’t wait until it’s too late.

- Toini, 19
CHAPTER 4
Caring for your house and land

### 4.2 Land

There are many things you can do with the land you have, even if it is a small plot or the soil quality does not seem very good. Before you get started, however, ask other adults who know more about this and are willing to teach you. For example, what is the best way to plow your land? Does it make sense to start a bee-keeping project, or can you learn more about harvesting local fruits and mopane worms? Can you have a fish pond in your area and start breeding fish? What is the best way to start a kitchen garden?

For additional advice, ask your local Extension Worker from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry. Sometimes this Ministry can supply you with fertilizers, small plants or seeds, or occasionally some farm animals. It’s worth asking them.

The main thing to remember is that everything we live on today comes from the land. Think of the food you eat, the clothes you wear, and the things you have in your house. We should treasure whatever land we own. Like other possessions, however, land can very quickly lose its value and its productive ability if it is not cared for properly.

Some of the best ways to maintain the quality of land used for cultivation are by:

- Clearing away stones, bottles and materials that do not decompose.
- Leaving stumps, by not digging them out, collecting or burning them (which also prevents soil erosion).
- Periodically adding manure and fertilizers.
- Arranging your field or garden with contour ditches to prevent soil from washing away.
- Rotating your crops: Every other planting season plant a crop that returns strength to the soil, for example, one year mahangu or maize and the next year beans or ground-nuts.
- Planting and harvesting in accordance with the right seasons.
- Using the best seeds for the type of soil you have.

The land you own should be clearly demarcated to avoid future confusion and conflicts. If the land is shared, make sure you know your boundaries.

Make sure all land payments are paid-off or, if you cannot afford the payments, negotiate this with the local (traditional) authority. Before you make any new agreement about your land, obtain the consent of your family members and talk with the local (traditional) authority.

Know the value of your land before you give any of it away, or sell or exchange it for anything.

### Kitchen Gardens:

Even if you do not own or have access to a lot of land, you may still have a small area around your house that you can use for a “kitchen garden.” This term refers to a garden about the size of a door that you can keep watered using old laundry- and bathing-water, and with leftover kitchen-water that you save in a basin or bucket. If you don’t have a lot of experience in gardening, you can concentrate on easy-to-grow healthy plants such as tomatoes, herbs, cabbage and other green vegetables, and sunflowers for their seeds and oil. Also, if you don’t have a fence and you need to protect your “kitchen garden” from donkeys or goats, build a ring of dead thorn-bushes or palm fronds as a barrier.

### 4.3 Clothing and bedding

Everyone needs clothes and a place to sleep at night. Even if what you have isn’t what you want, you should take care of what you already have.

#### Clothing

We can divide our clothes into three categories: The quality, shape, size and style of the clothing tell us which category they fit into:

1. Clothes for being in the community, such as going to work or school
2. Casual or play clothes for daily chores and activities around the house
3. Clothes for special occasions (also called, formal clothing).

#### Useful hints and tips

**LOOKING AFTER YOUR CLOTHES**

- Sort out the laundry before you start washing: lighter colours and cleaner clothes should not be mixed with the darker colours, or with very dirty clothes. This prevents the dark colours and heavy dirt from ruining your other clothes.

- Do not forget to read the washing instructions on the label sewn inside your clothes. Follow the instructions

- Soak laundry at least two hours before you start to wash.

- If there is bubble gum or glue on the clothes, apply some petroleum jelly on the affected area, add a paste of washing powder and then rub or twist that part until gradually the bubble gum or glue, jelly and the paste will all disappear together.

- For ink-pen writing on the clothes, try a deodorant spray or any spray on the dry affected area.

- Soaking woven items should be done with special care, as prolonged soaking or stretching may cause them to lose their original colours and shape.

- Hang your clothes inside-out so that they don’t lose their colour.
Caring for your house and land

Wear the right clothes for each activity. This preserves them longer. By contrast, wearing formal clothes for daily chores looks silly and will spoil them. Formal clothes - especially for children - should be kept in separate bags or some other place out-of-their-reach, so that they do not just get used any-which-way. Clothes can get burned if children are allowed to play near fires or heaters.

**Note:** Children can get burned too, and that is even worse. So don’t let anyone play with matches or near an open fire.

Clothes should be kept clean in order to look nice and last long as long as possible. Torn clothes should be mended, for example, by replacing loose zippers and elastics. Do not leave clothes hanging on the drying-line after they are dry, because smoke and dust can collect on them and makes them dirty again. Long exposure to excessive heat and rain causes the clothes to fade and sometimes get torn.

Outgrown clothes should not be thrown away, burned or buried, but should be stored and given to younger children or other people in need. (You could also sell them for money to replace them.) Clothes that are too big should also be stored until somebody else in the family fits into them. Clothes that are too big should also be stored until somebody else in the family fits into them. Clothes which are too big for younger children or other people in need. (You could also sell them for money to replace them.) Clothes that are too big should also be stored until somebody else in the family fits into them.

**Bedding**

Bedding materials should also be cleaned regularly. Pillows and duvets should be covered before use. Blankets and comforters should be treated according to their caring instructions, which you can usually read on the label that came with the item when it was bought. Hanging blankets outside in the sunlight for a few hours can freshen them, even if you can’t wash them in soap and water.

During the hot seasons, store winter bedding and heaters safely away in bags or boxes, or in a closet. When bedding gets ripped or stained, repair it or wash it carefully. Do not get rid of bedding away unless repairing and cleaning it has become truly impossible.

**4.4 Documents**

Take extremely good care of all documents. By documents we mean all national identity papers, certificates and receipts - such as the birth and death certificates of family members, identity cards, travel-passports, health-passports, school reports and awards, academic diplomas and degrees, special declarations, proof-of-payments for properties, assets and possessions, and so on. Most of these documents are given in their original and it can be difficult or impossible to get a replacement. Therefore, you must be very careful with all the documents you have. It is best to file them in a fire-resistant and water-tight box where they can’t get lost, dirty or damaged. If you do have copies, give them to a trusted relative or adult friend to keep for you.

Some important documents can also be laminated for protection against moisture and tearing. Often, people like to store documents in paper or plastic envelopes. However, you need to know that letters or drawings may fade away if they are kept in plastic for too long, or else the paper may end up sticking to the plastic.

Also exposing some paper to oil or water or to prolonged sunlight also causes letters or drawings to fade away. To be on the safe side, get a certified copy made for each document you have at your local police station (meaning, a copy that is signed as a true-copy), and keep that separately.

Do not leave documents in children’s hands; an older person must take responsibility for them. Although people are generally expected to carry their own health passports with them at all times, this does not work with small children. Once the health passport is lost, it becomes difficult for the health workers to know about the child’s medical history and treatments that were given previously. This is one reason that a small child should never go alone to see a doctor or nurse, but rather with an older person who carries the proper documents.

Take care of what you have. You won’t be able to replace it easily.

- Kenneth, 20

**4.5 Structures and Buildings**

How would life be if we had no roofs over our heads at night? Everyone needs a safe place to live that protects us and our possessions from robbers and bad weather. But every house also needs to be cared-for, in order to last a long time. This applies to both traditional and modern structures. For example, when a pole falls down, or some metal sheeting becomes loose, it should be put back securely and skillfully. Leaning these items onto one another isn’t good enough. Stalks, poles, sticks, and grasises from your house should not be used for firewood.

Do not be tempted just because it is only one time. If you remove structural materials from your house, the building will become weaker and if there is no replacement, then the house can eventually collapse.

Protect sticks and grasses from animals - including livestock like goats or pigs, and pests like worms or termites. In particular, any sign of termites must be dealt with immediately. Patiently loosen the termites from the structure and kill those that come out. Put ash in and around the affected area to minimize termite damage. You can also use small amounts discarded motor-oil for this purpose. Ask your neighbours if there are other traditional methods that are common in your area to get rid of pests.

If you pay attention to small repairs that need to get done, then you have a better chance of avoiding major repairs later on that are much more costly. If you need to replace old or worn-out materials and the same type of material is not available anymore or it has become too expensive, you may be able to substitute it with something else. For example, if long sticks were used but you can’t get any more, palm branches can be used instead. Safely store extra building materials in case you need them – for example, poles, stalks, sticks, or bricks. Don’t abandon, destroy, burn, or sell them, just because you don’t need them right away.

Renovating and repairing buildings can require special skills and technical knowledge. If necessary, ask someone you trust to help you do the work, or else to find an expert who can assist. If you are told that a repair will cost a lot of money, ask the person you trust to make sure that you are getting a fair price, or to suggest another way to get the job done.
4.6 Animals

Domestic animals need to be looked after and when needed, fed and given medical care to ensure that they are protected, healthy and (if desired) multiplying. We can divide domestic animals into two groups: pets and livestock (chickens and grazing animals). The first thing to worry about is protection, because neglected or abandoned animals are likely to get sick, run away, or go missing. When that happens, dishonest people may also grab the animals for themselves.

Depending on the kind of pets or livestock you have, your animals will provide you with food, companionship, money, and security. Although you can benefit from the animals you have, this is a two-way street. You have to take care of them if you want them to help you. Perhaps you think mostly about the meat that you can get from the animals (livestock) you own. However, you should understand that slaughtering animals just because you want meat is not a good idea. You may get addicted to it, and before you realize it all of your animals are finished.

Useful hints and tips

- Keep buildings and walls clean. Younger siblings will see that you are trying to make your home nice for everyone, and they will appreciate that – even if they don’t tell you directly.

- If you have oil paint on your walls and boards, clean the surface regularly with a wet cloth and soap (preferably dish-wash liquid or Handy Andy). Dirt-marks, smoke damage, and hand-writing on your walls, floors or ceilings can spoil the image of your home and make it feel less welcoming to visitors and to other family members. A slightly damp cloth can be used on wood, metal, and fabric. The best way to clean windows is with water mixed with a bit of soap, and use old newspapers to rub the windows dry.

- Always remove dust and insects from walls, floors and ceilings. (Spider webs are a question: Some people say that spiders eat mosquitoes and therefore you should keep them. Others claim that spiders can bite people or cause allergies that make some people sneeze. You decide yourself, what you want to do.) Bubblegum, cello-tape and glue should not be used to stick papers or photos onto the wall as they leave marks that pull of the paint and even some plaster when they are removed. Similarly, unnecessary nails and screws should not be hammered into walls as they can also leave permanent holes when removed.

- Spare keys should be kept safely – but not near the door or lock to which they belong; as someone may find them there and break-in. If you lose the key to your house, do not smash the doors, bars, or windows to get in, because a burglar will be able to follow you afterwards. If necessary, break the lock because that is easier and cheaper to replace. Always beware of fire. Keep household items away that can burn easily, especially paraffin (that is used for cooking). Fires should not be lit close to structures and buildings. Never let young children play with fire and always make sure that when you are cooking, the fire is properly attended-to.
Caring for your house and land

4.7 Household equipment

Many families have gardening and farming equipment such as wheelbarrows, spades, ploughs, a hose, and so on. You may also have household furniture and equipment such as beds, lounge furniture, shade-nets, baskets, stoves, roasters, a refrigerator, tents, washing basins, etcetera.

Whatever you have should be well maintained and taken care of. Most of these items are very expensive and difficult to replace. Keep your belongings clean after using them, and properly store what you don’t use every day. Never leave machines or equipment lying around as this may cause accidents or be stolen by other people.

Know the value of what you have. Selling, destroying or giving away your things without knowing their value or use can result in a serious loss on your side.

If you do not know how to use some of the machines or equipment you have, do not worry or feel ignorant. Rest assured that one day – through people, books or other media – you will definitely learn how to use them. For now, the most important thing is to take good care of what you have, and if your equipment requires servicing or repairs, have an expert do this job for you.

Extra attention should be given to electrical equipment and machinery because anything using electricity can be dangerous and easily damaged. Follow the care instructions carefully. Do not try to fix or repair appliances if you do not have the proper skills. Note that you may have to use some money for maintaining or repairing your equipment, or to pay for labour. But this is worthwhile if it keeps the equipment in good shape. (Just make sure you have someone trustworthy doing the repairs and upkeep, so no one takes unfair advantage of you.)

Never give away an item just because somebody tells you that it is out-dated or useless, or if the person says that he or she will replace some parts for free (unless you know the person well). You need to be people-smart, which means that you should get the advice of adult friends and relatives on these kinds of matters before you make a decision about what you own.

Similarly, lending your equipment to other people can be risky, especially if your equipment breaks down and you are responsible for servicing, gasoline, etc. So, in this case, consider charging fees or have conditions attached to your lending – for example, by deciding ahead of time what the other person’s responsibility should be. It sometimes works out well if that person also has some equipment that you can borrow in an exchange, or if that other person can assist you with some farming or household repairs that you can’t do yourself. (Be sure you know the equipment you borrow is in good shape before you bring it home, however, so you won’t be held responsible for something you didn’t break!)

Keep a register of who borrows what, indicating the date you lent the item out (with the borrower’s signature) and when it comes back to you. This will help you keep track of who has borrowed what. It also informs other family members of the item’s whereabouts, and serves as proof in case the other person denies having borrowed anything from you.

Special care is needed for equipment that you use for cooking. Ensure that kitchen utensils are always cleaned and well stored. Always empty steel containers after using them because, if you leave liquids in them for a long time, the metal may corrode and leak. Do not leave any items near a fire as they may get blackened or burned. Exposure to rain or too much sunlight is also a problem, so don’t leave things outside.

Do not use items intended for food for other purposes, such as bathing, feeding pets, or outdoor work. This is unhealthy. If you can, keep some dishes and utensils for special occasions, such as when visitors come. This creates a nice impression and makes the visitor feel good. Utensils for special occasions should be stored separately, and out of the reach of young children.

“\nI’ve learned to live with the phrase, ‘A dollar saved is a dollar earned.’ I spend as little as possible, and the money I have left over I use for my education.

- Michael, 19\n"
4.7 Household energy

By household energy, we mean electricity and heating substances such as wood, paraffin, coal, and gas. Since these are expensive and in limited supply, use them sparingly. When not in need, turn off the electric lights and appliances. Keep cooking fires as small and efficient as possible, and put out the fire when you finish cooking your food. Unused coal and wood can be lit again, which saves money and resources.

Always try to save some money for an emergency. You never know when you will need it.
- Helvi, 21

Here is information on three other ways to save fuel:

**Fuel Efficient Stoves** – reduce the amount of firewood needed to cook food, which saves trees and also saves the time and energy that is normally used for collecting firewood. Fuel-efficient stoves can be constructed with an old metal paint or oil drum and some wire.

**Solar Ovens** – use the sun for cooking, and they are excellent because they don’t cost anything at all to use. You can make one out of a cardboard box, newspaper, tape, a piece of glass, aluminum foil and some black paint. To get more information on how to construct and use a solar oven, contact NaDEET at: Tel 063-693-012, Fax 063-693-013 or www.nadeet.org

**Mashed-paper bricks** (or any other burnable material such as dried cow-dung and palm-seeds) – can also be used as fuel to cook food or boil water. Soak newspapers and other old papers in water; squeeze them into a tight ball or brick-shape; and then expose them to the sunlight to dry.

Finally, if you have collected wood for a wood-burning stove or open fire, store the wood in a safe, dry and well-ventilated area. This is because exposure to excessive heat and rain causes the wood to rot. If you have pruned some trees, do not throw away or burn the branches as trash, because these can also be used as firewood once they dry.

**Some more energy-saving and safety tips**

- Consider cooking just once a day – for example, for soups. Refrigerate what you don’t need, and then all you must do is warm up the food for the next meal.

- Use the most efficient cooking method available – that is, the method that is cheapest or saves the most fuel. Solar energy is best, if it is available.

- If you use solar energy for electric light or hot water, always make sure that the solar batteries get charged during the day so that you can use the light and hot water at night.

- Avoid lending out your iron or cooking stove, and don’t let other people use your wood, electricity or gas for free. In part, this is because these items are dangerous, and you don’t want your things to end up hurting someone. Also, fuel and power are expensive, so you need to save as much as you can.

- Never immerse electrical appliances in water or liquids, as this can be very dangerous.

- Keep fires away from things that aren’t supposed to burn like curtains or furniture or the walls of your house. Also, keep children away from fires and don’t let them play with matches.

- Do not allow children to use electrical appliances without supervision!
Don’t lose hope. When bad times come, remember that good times will follow.

- Lavisha, 16

How much money you and your family need, depends a lot on how you manage the money that you have. Managing your money involves three steps. These are: Wise Saving, Wise Budgeting and Wise Spending.

5.1 Wise Saving

Sometimes, parents and guardians were able to leave an inheritance – often including money - for their children. In this situation, you must learn what it means to wisely save or invest what has been provided for you and your siblings until you absolutely need the money. If you have a lot of money, you should request the help of a financial institution or bank. But even if you get just a little bit of money, it is important to try to always save some of it for the future.

If you want to know more about the different options offered by banks and financial institutions, visit them and enquire. Better yet, bring along an older person you trust who knows about these matters, so that person can advise you. Different banks and financial institutions offer varying terms and conditions with regard to their requirements and the interest (monthly income) they pay. Therefore, you have to carefully compare the benefits and costs of each investment plan, before you decide where to put your money. As you can see, this is very complicated.

Keep in mind that a distinction is often made between “bank savings” and “investment.” Savings tend to be safe – you put your money in the bank and you are guaranteed that each month your money will grow (increase in value) with a little bit of interest, and you can be sure that your money will be there when you want it. But with this method, your money will likely be subject to various bank charges and the interest will probably not be very high. You could possibly get much more income if you invest your money, but investments tend to be riskier so you may lose all your money, as well. This also happens if you decide to buy something with your money that you expect will increase in value, like a house. Sometimes your predictions are correct, but sometimes they are not. Remember to consult all beneficiaries before you decide how to save or invest your money, and obtain their consent in writing.

Use extreme caution when dealing with these issues: Money attracts dishonest, selfish and prideful people who say that they want to help you but in reality the only people they want to help are themselves. It is amazing how quickly carelessness, greed and ignorance can waste money that took years and years of hard work and self-control to earn. If you decide to give any money to a trusted adult to save it or invest it for you, be sure to have other people witness your transfer of funds and have an agreement in writing so you can keep track of how much money is rightfully yours. Disagreements about money between family members and friends can create painful conflicts that are hard to heal later on.

5.2 Wise Budgeting

Many people find it hard to make a budget and stick to it, but this is an important thing to learn. Otherwise, you will be tempted to spend all your money when you get some, say at the beginning of the month, and then two or three weeks later you will run out and everyone in the household will be forced to go hungry.

When it comes to budgeting, practice makes perfect. This means that even if you don’t get it right in the beginning, over time you will learn this skill. In planning your budget, it may be helpful to separate your expenses into different categories – for example:

1. Money you owe (debts);
2. Household expenses, such as rent, maintenance costs, water, and electricity;
3. Food - separating out essential foods from treats and other “extra food” that you would also like to have;
4. School-related costs;
5. Transport for yourself and other family members, for example, to school or work;
6. Health-related costs;
7. Essential clothing;
8. Toiletries, such as toothpaste, soap, and feminine hygiene;
9. Phone expenses, if you have a phone (keep this to a minimum if you can);
10. Savings and true emergencies.

MONEY-MATTERS

- First, check on the exact amount of money you have (or expect to get) and how long that money is supposed to last.
- Talk with other members of your household to get everyone’s input on how to spend the money that comes into your family – and possibly, on what else can be done to bring in additional income so that the overall amount of money will increase. (Note that some family members may prefer to be responsible for some of their own income and expenses, in addition to the shared expenses you set aside for the household in general.)
- Prioritise your needs! What is critical for you and your family, and what can you live without?
- Make a written list of the things you absolutely HAVE to spend money on. When you go shopping, stick to this list!
- If possible, decide ahead of time how much money you can save – and do your best to keep this “sacred” (meaning, don’t dig into your savings except as planned or in a real emergency).

Useful hints and tips

Once you have a budget, stick to it! Ignoring the budget you have drawn up is equal to not having a budget in the first place.
You may wonder about “Recreation, celebrations and entertainment,” which is not on this list. These items should only be added if you have enough money leftover - for example, at the end of the month after all other expenses are paid, and savings are set aside.

Remember that for some of these costs, you may be able to get help from another member of your family, or from the government or an NGO. But still, you will need to know how expensive everything is, as one question that these representatives always ask is, “How much is this going to cost?”

5.3. Wise Spending

It is vital to control yourself when it comes to spending, so you have no regrets afterwards.

Avoid buying things on credit, if possible. The way “buying on credit” works is that, over time, you end up paying a whole lot of extra money on interest and other expenses – much more than the original item cost. Instead, try to save up for an item first and then pay for it in cash, all at once. If you pay cash, you can often get a discount, as well – be sure to ask!

Don’t give into temptation to buy something that you don’t really need (and that wasn’t in your budget), just because it looks nice and suddenly you decide you want it.

Protect your money from getting stolen. Keep the money you need for right now (or in the next few days) in a safe place in your house, where others can’t easily find it. Save the rest of your money in a bank or in a post-office account, if possible.

By not having a lot of money around the house, you will also be less tempted to spend it for things you don’t really need. If your money is stolen (or other possessions that you own), go to the police and report it immediately.

Every family is different. You shouldn’t follow the example of other people who may have more money than you, or who may not be spending their money wisely. You don’t need to buy new furniture just because your friends or neighbours did. Don’t get involved in financial-competitions that rarely result in a reward; this is like throwing your money away. It would be foolish to spend money on expensive clothes, trips, alcohol or cosmetics, and then find you can’t pay for your own education or that of your siblings. Spend wisely and you can feel very proud of yourself!

5.3. Getting help from the Government

Your family may be eligible for one of the social welfare grants provided by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare as a safety net for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children. This would be worth checking out with someone who works for the Ministry – for example, with a government social worker in the Child Welfare division. If you don’t know where to go or you feel you need help with this, ask for assistance from your local councilor, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), or from someone associated with the Regional AIDS Coordinating Committee (also known RACOC, based in the Governor’s office).

The three types of grants that are most relevant are the Maintenance Grant, the Foster Care Grant and the Special Maintenance Grant for children less than 16 years with disabilities.

The Maintenance Grant – provides limited financial support for the child(ren) of a biological or adoptive parent who fulfils certain criteria. In most cases, the parent must be widowed and very poor, and in possession of a death certificate for the child’s other parent. (There are other criteria too, but these are the main ones.)

The Foster Care Grant – is available to a foster parent who has been approved by a court to care for a child or children. Grandparents and adult siblings can apply to become foster parents. Foster parents have to be adults, not children under the age of 18.

The Special Maintenance Grant – is available for a child who has a medical certificate and a report from a social worker that defines the child’s disability.

Note: As of early 2008, the amount of support provided is N$200 per month for the first child and N$100 per month for the remaining eligible children. Additionally, the grantee’s school expenses – that is, the beneficiary’s school development funds and examination costs – should be eliminated or reduced. The same goes for hospital or clinic payments. But you may have to ask for this each time, and show the official documentation to prove that the child is getting a social welfare grant.
When my parents died, I thought it was the end of the world. But now I realise life goes on.
- Francios, 20

You should treasure the good memories of what your deceased parents and other caregivers used to say or do, and what they taught you about life. To show your continued respect and appreciation for them, and to feel their continued presence, you can:

- Do things as if they still see you – for example, behaving well, working hard, being sober, etc.
- Follow family routines that they started – for example, going to church, conducting family prayers at home, being on time, etc.
- Take care of their graves – for example, marking them with a nice cross or tombstone, clearing the grasses, planting some greens or flowers, etc.
- Make sure that their hard earned possessions or savings are not misused.

Many families also put together memory books or memory boxes in which they preserve photographs, letters, stories, and other small items that help children remember their deceased loved ones. This can be done while their parent or other relative is still alive, or afterwards.

6.1 Physical treasures

Can you think of some personal item that once belonged to someone you loved, that now means something special to you? Family memorabilia and antiques may be old and even broken, but they are important because they carry a special meaning that go beyond their financial value in the marketplace. They are meant to be passed down from one generation to the next and should be treated with particular care and pride. These items never become outdated. They include books, photographs, ornaments, jewelry, and household dishes from long ago. Many are unique, meaning that they are one-of-a-kind items that can never be properly replaced.

It is important for every family to keep a record of its own history. Do not expose these items to excessive heat, wind or rain. Do not give away, sell or auction off any personal belongings of your parents or grandparents without first discussing this with other family members. Know the value of what you have. You may be surprised: although many family treasures are not worth very much if you sell them, some antiques and traditional jewelry made from long ago are nowadays worth a cow.

6.2 Spiritual treasures

Many families are known for their spiritual commitment, practices and beliefs that date back from a long, long time ago. By contrast, it is heartbreaking nowadays to see the disrespect that some children show to their religious or spiritual heritage.

As the family-head, you should encourage your family to keep up the spiritual traditions that have been part of your family in the past. Alternatively, if your family doesn’t have a strong spiritual background, you can start introducing a religious or spiritual component by spending time with families that you admire and find inspiring, and then copying some of their beliefs and practices. Many times, local church leaders are also willing to help by lending you books and offering their guidance.

Your religious or spiritual foundation should be sound, practical, and real. It is often said that “you do not need to understand to believe; however you need to believe and then you will understand.” Be patient: this doesn’t happen overnight. Even more importantly, you need to practice what you preach. That means that you need to live according to the moral principles that you teach your younger siblings.

6.3 Cultural Treasures

We remember our cultural heritage through family stories, customs, and small items that have been passed down from one generation to the next, such as a family bed or an old necklace. Your traditional language, songs and family rituals help define your identity, and this is very beautiful. Nurture this heritage and pass it on. We should never deny or forget who we really are. Don’t give cultural items away just because you don’t understand or appreciate what they mean. Ask old people that you know to explain how they used to do things long ago, and this way you can learn more about your past.

Contemporary fashion and modern development should never draw us away from our identity as Africans. Cultural customs that are benefical should be promoted, such as practices that encourage people to be caring and respectful to each other. On the other hand, you may find that other traditional customs should be changed – for example, nowadays we believe that boys and girls have equal rights, including the right to go to school, own property and choose a career.

God helped people in the Bible, which means He can also help you.
- Lowisa, 14

When my parents died, I thought it was the end of the world. But now I realise life goes on.
- Francios, 20
If you have problems, think of them as opportunities to make you strong.

- Lydia, 21

No matter how hard you try to keep yourself and everyone else in your family healthy, sometimes people get sick. Then, what should you do?

### 7.1 How to examine a sick person

To find out the needs of a sick person, first you must ask important questions and then examine the person carefully. You should look for signs and symptoms that tell you how ill the person is and what kind of sickness he or she may have. When you examine a sick person, write down your findings and keep them for the health worker at the clinic, health centre, or hospital.

To begin, you should find out:

1. What bothers the person most right now?
2. What makes the person feel better or worse?
3. How and when did the sickness begin?
4. Have you had this trouble before, and do you know others in the school or neighbourhood who had it?

If the sick person is a baby who cannot talk yet, look for signs of pain. Notice the child’s movements or when he or she cries.

Take the sick person’s temperature with a thermometer, or if you don’t have a thermometer then take the back of one hand on the sick person’s forehead and the other on your own or of another healthy person, and compare the two. If the sick person is hot and has a fever, you should feel the difference.

Check the sick person’s pulse or heartbeat. To do this, put your fingers on the wrist of the sick person where the veins are, or else on the neck beside the voice box. If you still can’t feel the pulse, put your ear directly on the chest and listen to the heartbeat. Pay attention to the rate, strength, and regularity of the pulse. If you have a watch or timer, count the pulses per minute.

Other things to do include checking the eyes, throat, nose and mouth to see if they are normal, painful, runny, plugged, or swollen. Ask about pain or tenderness in the belly and check for muscle pain, stiffness, or lack-of-feeling in the arms or legs. Look at the person’s skin: Are there any rashes, spots, changes in colour, sores, or unusual swellings?

If you notice anything very unusual, or if the person is in extreme pain, take that person to see a doctor or nurse immediately.

Other signs of a dangerous illness are:

- high fever (over 39 degrees);
- loss of large amounts of blood;
- coughing or vomit with blood;
- a bluish colour around the lips and nails;
- great difficulty breathing; a day without being able to drink liquids;
- a day without being able to urinate;
- urine with blood;
- hard black stools like tar;
- convulsions;
- a stiff jaw or neck with an arched back;
- continued loss of weight over a period of time;
- the person feels faint when standing up;
- a lump on the body that keeps growing bigger;
- sores that do not go away with treatment;
- and problems with pregnancy and childbirth.

Never send a small child alone to a health worker. An older sibling or trusted adult should always go with the sick person, and should report on the signs and symptoms of the illness that you observed at home. Also, never give medicine that was prescribed for one person to another person, even if their signs and symptoms may look similar.

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**Useful Salt**

Salt has many uses in the home as a non-abrasive scrubber and for the body. You can use it with some vinegar to clean many metal-surfaces, to cut crease on pots, to clean smelly drains (by pouring a mix of hot water and salt on the dram), and to clean old sponges (by soaking them in cold water mixed with salt).

Even more important, one teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water makes a good gargle for a sore throat, and salt mixed with baking soda makes for a good mouthwash (use an equal amount of salt and baking soda), or an effective teeth and gum-cleaner (mix one portion of salt to two of baking soda).

To bathe your eyes and reduce their puffiness, soak a clean washcloth into a solution of one half-teaspoon of salt to a half-litre of water, and then put your washcloth gently on your closed eyes.

Giving yourself a dry salt-scrub (by rubbing dry salt on your skin) removes dry skin and helps your blood circulate.
You can’t hide from your problems it is better to face them.
- Simon, 20

7.2 Traditional medicine and witchcraft

Around the world, people use home remedies like herbal teas to treat coughs and colds. In some places, the older ways of healing are still practised by traditional healers, many of whom have been trained and certified by the Namibian government, which is very good.

Many home remedies and traditional healers are helpful, but others are less. A few traditional practices are risky and even harmful. Only use home remedies and traditional medicine if you are sure they are safe and know exactly how to use them. It is safer to treat very serious illnesses with modern medicine that you get from a hospital, health centre or clinic.

In particular, avoid giving traditional medicines where the measurements you are asked to use are vague – not precise. Do not do anything that may increase health risks such as piercings or sucking blood. Finally, do not force a sick person to vomit or give him or her herbs that stimulate diarrhea or constipation, as this can be very dangerous.

If a person believes very strongly in witchcraft, then it is possible the person may actually become ill. But bewitching someone won’t work if the other person doesn’t believe in witchcraft.

If you have a strange sickness, do not blame a witch or go to a witchdoctor, but ask for modern medical advice. Do not waste your money on any magic claims or witchcraft. Remember that you cannot become ill from witchcraft if you do not think that witchcraft has any power over you.

7.3 Care of the sick person

Medicines are not always necessary to treat a sick person. But good care is always important. With many illnesses, good care is enough to help the body heal itself.

By good care, we mean:

- Making sure the sick person is comfortable. The person should be able to rest in a quiet place, with plenty of fresh air and light.
- Checking that the sick person should not get too cold or hot: if the person is cold, cover him or her with a blanket. If the person has fever, then do not cover the person at all. You can also help a person feel cooler by sponging him or her with a blanket. If the person has fever, do not cover the person at all. You can also help a person feel cooler by sponging him or her with a blanket.
- Making sure the sick person has plenty to drink. With many illnesses, especially when there is diarrhea or fever, the person should drink plenty of liquids. Clean water, tea, juice, and broth (light soups) are generally best.
- Encouraging the sick person to eat healthy food: eating right helps the sick get well.
- Keeping the sick person clean. He or she should be bathed every day – with a sponge or cloth at the bed, if necessary – and the person’s clothes, sheets and covers should also be washed regularly.

If medicine has been prescribed, help the sick person take them correctly – meaning the right amounts, on-time, and with or without food or water, as the prescription requires.

7.4 Two common conditions

Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body has lost too much fluid, usually through diarrhea and vomiting. The body simply does not have enough water any more. People of any age can become dehydrated, but dehydration develops more quickly and becomes most dangerous with small children. At the earliest signs, act quickly. Give lots of liquids to drink – a thin cereal, teas, soups, fruit juice, or plain clean water. Keep giving food, if the person accepts it. To babies, keep giving breast milk or formula. In addition, a special Rehydration Drink called ORS helps to prevent or treat dehydration, especially in cases of severe watery diarrhea.

Colds and flu

Colds and flu are common virus infections that may cause runny nose, cough, sore throat or at sometimes fever or pain in the joints. Antibiotics do not help cure a virus. The best thing to do is to:

- Drink plenty of clean water or herbal teas (for example, rooibos) or broth (light soups).
- Get plenty of rest.
- Gargle with warm water if the throat becomes sore.
- Take some paracetamol (aspirin or Panadol) to help lower fever and relieve aches and pain.

Monitor the cold or flu to make sure that it doesn’t develop into another illness, for example if there is a high fever or the sick person coughs so much that he or she has difficulty breathing. Try to prevent ear and sinus infections by wiping the nose, not blowing it.

If the situation doesn’t improve after a few days, or if the patient becomes very weak, seek help from your nearest health facility.

Note: an adult can take 3 liters a day; a small child should have 1 liter a day.

Useful hints and tips

HOW TO MAKE A REHYDRATION DRINK

Take 1 litre of clean water, and mix in half a level teaspoon of salt plus 8 level teaspoons of sugar.

You can also use packets of Oral Rehydration Salts instead.

Give the sick person sips every five minutes, day or night. Even if the person vomits, give more as some of it will stay in the body.

To babies, keep giving breast milk or formula. In addition, a special Rehydration Drink called ORS helps to prevent or treat dehydration, especially in cases of severe watery diarrhea.
7.5 HIV & AIDS

Everyone these days needs to be educated about HIV & AIDS. There are many resources in your community, including VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing) centres, local NGOs, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and the Ministry of Education. For more information and guidance, all primary school children in Namibia should participate in the after-school Window of Hope clubs (grades 4 – 7), and secondary school learners should enrol in the after-school “My Future, My Choice” programme.

Young people who are not yet sexually active should be encouraged to practice abstinence (stay away from sex) until they have established a relationship with just one person for the rest of their lives, as in marriage. Practice what you preach, which means that this also applies to you. Where possible, you should also encourage a return to abstinence for young people who have already been sexually active.

Remember that you cannot get HIV from living together, breathing the same air, touching or hugging someone, using the same toilet or food, or being bitten by a mosquito or another insect. Remember that witchcraft cannot give someone HIV, nor can it cure it (there is no cure). Be careful if someone is bleeding, however, and cover all cuts and wounds with a clean cloth or waterproof plaster. Do not touch one person’s blood with another’s. Avoid sharing skin-cutting instruments that have not been sterilized first, such as razors or needles.

Some people say, “There is no such thing as a free lunch.” This means that one way or another, you have to pay for everything – if not in money, then in other ways. You should remember this when you are given gifts or assistance by someone you suspect may become a sugar-daddy (or sugar-mommy), as that person is likely to want sexual favours from you in the future. It is much better to say “No” now, rather than pay later with an unwanted pregnancy or sexually-transmitted disease such as HIV & AIDS.

Children aged 16 and over are able to get an HIV test without a parent’s or guardian’s consent. For more information, go to the New Start Voluntary Counseling & Testing centre nearest your home or phone 061-220-368. Condoms are available for free at your local health facility and should be used exactly as the instructions describe for people who are sexually active and want to remain that way.

If a family member is HIV+, that person can often live for many years without medical treatment, so long as he or she lives positively – meaning, a healthy lifestyle with good nutrition. Once the person starts ART (anti-retroviral treatment), carefully follow all the instructions given by the doctor or nurse. You can ask for help from a local NGO or from the hospital, if you have any questions or need assistance. But remember, ART treatment does not cost any money!

Note: People with HIV are more likely to get Tuberculosis (TB). Tuberculosis of the lungs is very contagious and people who live in the same house with someone who has TB, especially children, run a great risk of catching the disease. Early and full treatment for someone with TB is a key for that person, and to prevent its spread to other members of the family.

7.6 Drugs and alcohol

Many young people are tempted to try illegal drugs and alcohol. They may be curious because they know people who take these substances, and they want to know how it feels to be high or drunk. Some people also use drugs and alcohol because they don’t feel good about themselves, or because they feel peer pressure. This means that their friends are trying to get them to use alcohol or drugs, although REAL friends will never pressure others to do things that may cause them harm. Over time, people use drugs and alcohol because they have become addicted, and their bodies do not feel right unless they are drunk or high. This is a very serious situation and a person who feels like this needs help from an addiction counselor.

If you are tempted by alcohol or illegal drugs, think of these facts:

- Alcohol and drugs can change the way your mind and body works. They can cause you to get sick or feel depressed. They can also cause accidents and alter your judgment, meaning that you are more likely to make bad decisions that harm others and that you will regret later on.
- Alcohol and drugs can affect your performance at school or work. They will interfere with studying and prevent you from reaching your full potential.
- Alcohol and drugs can make a young person look old. Years of drinking or drugs will make your body look worn and tired.
- Alcohol and drugs will strain your relationship with your friends and family members. These substances are expensive and your family will suffer because there will be less money for food or household items.
- Drinking alcohol if you are under 18 years-of-age and taking drugs are illegal, and may result in an arrest and jail-time – sometimes keeping the person in prison for many years.

Alcohol doesn’t solve anything. It just creates another problem.

- Joseph, 17
7.7 Other health issues

You should visit your local clinic and register your family, or at least let the nurse know about your situation before you need any help, in order to make things easier when you do need assistance for yourself or your family. Once she knows about your family, the nurse may be able to help you in many ways. If you have any questions, be sure to ask her.

Make sure that young children are vaccinated on the right dates. To be sure, check their health passport for the next vaccination date. For more information, consult your nearest health facility. Sometimes, there are special immunization days for all people or for a certain age group (for example, concerning specific diseases such as polio), so pay attention to announcements or posters issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and then make sure all your family members are properly immunized.

If someone in the family has been given a prescription with certain medications to take, the instructions should be followed EXACTLY, and only that person should take the medicine – no one else.

Primary-school children should be prepared for how their bodies will start to change before they become teenagers. They need to know about sex, and about how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases – for example by staying abstinent until marriage or at least until they are much more grown up.

Make sure that the girls in your family understand about their monthly menstruation, and know how to keep themselves clean. If you are not comfortable talking about these issues, find someone else in your extended family or community who is – a trusted neighbour, aunt, or volunteer from a non-governmental organization.

To find out about other health issues, it is important that your family is always represented at community health meetings and educational campaigns. You should also listen to the radio for additional health information.

Last but not least, remember to take care of yourself. If you feel you need help, ask a family member or another trusted adult, or else someone from a local NGO, church or school. Give yourself some time off for a walk in the veld, or for prayer or time with friends. Nobody expects you to be perfect or to fully replace the role of parents or other caregivers who have died. Doing the best you can is all that anyone could hope for. Simply by trying, you are a blessing and an inspiration.

“To find someone who can help you, observe how the person helps someone else first.”
- Andreas, 17
What is HIV?
HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). By killing or damaging cells of your body’s immune system, HIV progressively destroys your body’s ability to fight infections and certain cancers.

People diagnosed with AIDS may get life-threatening diseases called opportunistic infections, which are caused by microbes such as viruses or bacteria that usually do not make healthy people sick.

Definitions of opportunistic infections:
- Illnesses caused by various organisms, some of which usually do not cause disease in persons with normal immune systems.
- Infections that are caused by organisms to which the body is normally immune. When the immune system is depressed or destroyed, as in AIDS, opportunistic infections can take hold.
- Infections that are caused by organisms to which the body is normally immune. When the immune system is depressed or destroyed, as in AIDS, opportunistic infections can take hold.
- An infection that occurs because of a weakened immune system. May be difficult to treat.
- Diseases which HIV positive people contract more easily because their immune systems are weakened by the HIV virus. Opportunistic infections include TB and Pneumonia.
- Infections caused by microbes that usually do not cause disease in healthy individuals, but which can result in overwhelming and widespread infection in people with immune deficiency. …

Infections which occur in people with HIV; usually uncommon in persons without HIV; includes TB, pneumonia and meningitis.

What does AIDS stand for?
Acquired - because HIV is not a condition passed on genetically; a person has to become infected with it.
Immune - because the immune system’s ability to fight off viruses and bacteria becomes much less effective.
Deficiency - because the immune system fails to work properly.
Syndrome - because there is a wide range of diseases and infections a person may experience. AIDS refers to individuals who have particular “AIDS-defining” conditions such as a very low CD4 white blood cell or specific illnesses.

What are the main routes of HIV transmission?
- These are the main ways in which someone can become infected with HIV:
  - Unprotected penetrative sex with someone who is infected.
  - Injection or transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products, donations of semen (artificial insemination), skin grafts or organ transplants taken from someone who is infected.
  - From a mother who is infected to her baby; this can occur during pregnancy, at birth and through breastfeeding.
  - Sharing unsterilised injection equipment that has previously been used by someone who is infected.
  - Parent-to-child-transmission (PTCT)
Sometimes I felt embarrassed to ask for help from neighbours. They mocked me and laughed behind my back. But I always kept looking until I found someone else who could help us.

- Rauha, 16
Be polite to visitors and clean up the house for them, but don’t let them push you around. If you feel that someone wants to take away your rights, ask for help at the Women and Child Protection Unit or the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

- Armin, 17

Extended family and community relationships are very important in African culture, and this should be promoted within your household. As the head-of-household, you set the example that others will follow. Your relatives and neighbours will pay attention to the way they observe you relating to others, and that will determine how they will behave and act towards you.

Many of the children we interviewed from child-headed households told us that they often experience problems asking for assistance from community members, especially when relatives and neighbours can’t help and make things worse by gossiping about their problems to others. This causes the children to feel discouraged and want to give up. Other youngsters advised them differently:

“You must remember you are innocent and it is not your fault you need help,” one girl said. “The bad words people say won’t kill you. Just keep trying.”

Eventually, you will find someone who cares,” another youngster added. “But remember that you should go back to that person when things feel better and say ‘thank you.’ That will help develop a good relationship.”

“When you talk to others, you don’t have to tell the whole story,” a third child suggested. “You just have to explain what is important at that time.”

Finally, one boy recommended, “You should approach different people depending on what your particular need is: sometimes the best person a relative, other times a neighbour, or a teacher, or a friend. If you choose carefully, you are more likely to get the assistance you want.”

8.1 Neighbours

Your neighbours are the people who live closest to you - who often see you, hear noises from your house, and understand what is going on in your family. On an every-day basis, they can help with minor but urgently needed assistance such as salt and firewood. Even more importantly, they may be able to help in an emergency, for example if one of your siblings becomes sick or injured. If you do not know your neighbours well, however, ask someone you trust about them before you become too friendly. Once you are satisfied, here are some additional tips about how to establish and maintain a good relationship:

- Greet your neighbours respectfully whenever you see them. When it is convenient, also introduce visiting friends and relatives to them.
- Inform them about issues in the neighbourhood that might be of interest - for example, if you hear about a community meeting or a burst water-pipe in the area.
- Offer to look after your neighbour’s house and pets, if the neighbours are not around.
- Offer to look after your neighbour’s house and pets, if the neighbours are not around.

8.2 Relatives

In addition to the family members with whom you live in your house, you probably have other relatives who live elsewhere - for example, cousins, nieces and uncles. Sometimes these people are called your “extended family.” Different cultures view relatives differently, but all cultures agree that relatives should help us celebrate the good times, and also support us to the best of their ability when times are bad.

If you do not know who your relatives are, ask some nearby elders, community leaders or headmen if they know. Perhaps you have a family tree (a written document that lists your family members) that can also help you identify and trace your relatives.

Here are some ways to build and maintain a good relationship with your relatives:

- Know who they are and where they stay.
- Visit them and welcome them if they visit you.
- Invite them to family celebrations and events.
- Introduce them to people who are close to you, such as neighbours, friends and pastors.
- Update them on new developments, changes or plans in your household.
- Seek their advice when facing decisions involving your family’s property, as well as on other issues that may affect them.
- Offer your support (without negatively affecting your own household), should they be in need.

Useful hints and tips

WHEN A RELATIVE TRIES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU.

Unfortunately, relatives are like people everywhere, which means that most of them are good people but a few – sadly – are not. Some family members may try to take advantage of you or your siblings, because they know that your household is headed by a child. If you feel uncomfortable or believe you are being treated unfairly by a relative, ask for assistance from an adult you trust (for example, another relative, traditional leader, social worker, adult neighbour, or local councilor). If that person can’t or won’t help you, go to someone else until you feel you have gotten the help you need.

Make sure that you and your siblings do not spend time with adults you do not trust, or who say strange things that make you feel uncomfortable. If any of these people visit, ask a trusted neighbour if she or he can be with you at home during the time the visitors are there. Never leave them alone with your siblings and above all, if they are putting up for the night, prepare a separate place for them to sleep. If you do not have many rooms, ask a neighbour to house them overnight. This will help ensure that you and your siblings are safe.
Community relationships

When a relative tries to take advantage of you
Unfortunately, relatives are like people everywhere, which means that most of them are good people but a few – sadly – are not. Some family members may try to take advantage of you or your siblings, because they know that your household is headed by a child. If you feel uncomfortable or believe you are being treated unfairly by a relative, ask for assistance from an adult you trust (for example, another relative, traditional leader, social worker, adult neighbour, or local councilor). If that person can’t or won’t help you, go to someone else until you feel you have gotten the help you need.

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8.3 Friends and acquaintances

Unlike neighbours or relatives, you can choose your own friends. The key is: choose well! You don’t want people around you or your siblings who try promote bad habits or activities that harm other people.

Friends share similar interests and experiences, enjoy the time they spend together, and help each other cope with problems. Good friends have the other person’s best interest at heart: that is, they try to help the other person succeed and overcome life’s barriers. Friends are very important, but they should not take precedence over the responsibilities you have as a head-of-household to your immediate family.

Acquaintances are other people that you know and may spend time with, but who are not as close as friends. Over time, however, this could change and today’s acquaintances could become tomorrow’s good friends. Principles of a good friendship include, but are not limited to:

• Being open, trustworthy, honest, and loyal to each other.
• Understanding and respecting each other’s opinion. Friends know that everyone is unique and that people change, and that on some things friends must simply “agree to disagree.”
• Visiting each other, and sharing both good and bad times together.
• Exchanging small gifts and information.
• Helping the other person when in need – for example, with time, advice, and other resources.
• Being able to accept criticism from the other person: friends should be able to correct, reprimand, rebuke and appreciate each other.

Remember: A friend in need is a friend indeed!

8.4 Getting help from organisations (including a contact-list)

Most communities nowadays have individuals, organisations and government offices that can assist people in need, including households with orphans and other vulnerable children. Although they can’t solve all the problems that you may face, hopefully they can help. Some organizations also run after-school programmes, support-groups, and holiday camps which can also be fun and beneficial. And they may know about income-generating projects, young farmers’ groups, and literacy courses you can join. But perhaps you are wondering: How can you find the right person for the particular issue you need to address?

The main thing is to ask around – and to keep asking. Most government social workers and local organizations have developed linkages with your local councillor, health clinic, traditional authority, police, schools, NGOs, and many churches. So if you connect with any of them, they may be able to tell you how to reach the person who can help you. You can also start by asking your teacher, church leaders, or the nurse at your local health clinic. Alternatively, phone the organisation’s main number in the list at the back of this book, and ask for a local contact.

To succeed (without parental support), you need friends. I call on them to help me when I need assistance, but I’m also there when they need me.

- George, 16

If you have a problem, you must share it with someone else. Otherwise it will feel worse and worse.

- Matroos, 12
A last word

Although this book contains a lot of advice, our biggest recommendation is for you to trust yourself, believe in yourself, and keep up your good work. The point is, you have already proven to yourself and others that you can take charge of your household, you have done this for a long time, and you are doing a good job in the face of huge challenges. Based on that, we know you are strong, smart, caring, committed, resilient, responsible, creative, courageous, and hard-working.

We are proud of you, with all that you are doing to keep family going. And we believe that, through your efforts, you are also transforming the community in which you live. By this, we mean that you are making things better for the future – not only for your own siblings but for everyone around you. All of us owe you our thanks and deep appreciation.

Yours truly,
“Auntie Aini” and “Auntie Aune”

We hope this book gives you some ideas that are useful. But the most important thing to remember is this: It is what you do, day-in and day-out, that really makes the difference. Thus, it is also important for you to take care of yourself. Your work is hard and sometimes lonely.

From our own experience as former child heads-of-households, we believe that no one should do this work alone. Everyone needs help sometimes. Everyone needs another person’s shoulders to lean on. Asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness. It is normal, and it is important.

Above all, we thank you for what you are doing, and we shall pray for you and for your family. Go forth in strength, and remember your dreams. You are the future and we are confident that you will succeed.

Contact numbers

Key Namibian resources

This is not meant to be a complete list, but it is a good place to begin. Only the main (national) telephone phone numbers are given, however. Use these numbers to find out if there is a local contact nearer to you. Remember that if you are not satisfied with the response you get from one person, you can always ask to speak to someone else (for example, a supervisor) or contact another organization. Always be respectful in your communication, but never give up!

A school counsellor
Under the Ministry of Education, every primary and secondary school should have a trained counsellor. Go directly to the school or dial the main telephone number in Windhoek at T. 061 293 3111 (then, ask for Guidance and Counselling Services).

A government social worker.
Social Workers are generally affiliated with the Ministry of Health and Social Services T. 061 203 9111 or the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare T. 061-283-3111

Agriculture extension workers (farming and gardens)
Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry.
T. 061 208 7111 for more information.

There is also a Young Farmers’ Programme through the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations at T. 061-204-6111.

The Women and Child Protection Unit.
There is one in every region to provide protection against abuse and property-grabbing. Phone 061 209 5375 for more information.

HIV testing
This is provided through the Ministry of Health and Social Services (at a hospital or health centre), or via a New Start VCT Centre T. 061 220 368

NGOs
Namibia has many faith-based and other non-governmental organizations around the country. Some of the bigger ones that work with children are:

CAFO
Church Alliance for Orphans
T. 061 269 572

Catholic AIDS Action
T. 061 276 350
Contact numbers
Key Namibia Resources

ELCAP
Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia
T. 062 525 209

Legal Assistance Centre
AIDS Law Unit
T. 061 223 356

Lifeline/Childline
T. 061 232 221

NANASO
For a complete directory of AIDS service organisations
T. 061 261 122

Namibia Red Cross and Red Crescent Society
T. 061 235 226

Philippi Namibia
T. 061 259 291

Project Hope
T. 061 377 850

TKMOAMS
T. 065 220 384

UNICEF
For information and referral
T. 061 204 6111

Yelula/ U-khâi (Alliance 2015)
T. 065 31 373

Other
Find out about other local resources from your teacher or school counsellor, your church pastor or priest, or your traditional authority (headman or chief).
You can also approach your local Councilor or Governor’s Office for information about local organizations that attend meetings of the Regional AIDS Co-ordinating Committee (RACoC) and Constituency AIDS Co-ordinating Committee (CACoCs) in your area, which may be able to help you.

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