

Looking Beyond Viral Suppression: The Importance of Building Community Support and Self-Care

Krista Martel, Executive Director, The Well Project, Kimberly Canady and Evelyn Scalice

Isolation and stigma continue to pose significant barriers to optimal health and quality of life for women living with HIV. Data (including The Well Project's 2010-2019 survey) demonstrate that being connected to a supportive, empowered community can improve self-esteem and decrease self-stigma among women living with HIV, and that they may be particularly helpful to women who are isolated or not connected to a local support network. These connections can improve engagement in care, self-care, and health-seeking behaviors. This session will define and describe "community support" and "self-care," provide an overview of relevant data, and present personal perspectives of women living with HIV.