

Akilah and Carlos's Big Day of Discovery!



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AA-HA!

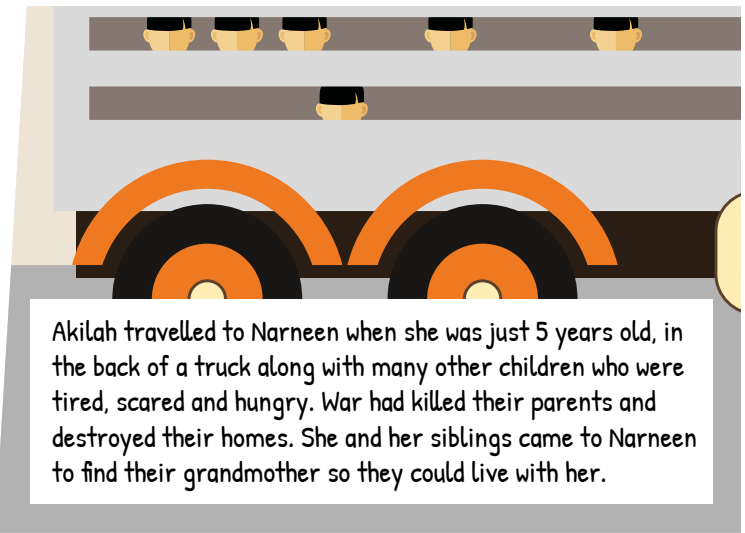
People and families have been arriving in Narneen for what seems like forever. Everyone is different, with different habits, ways of talking and dressing. They have many stories about how they came to be here – some lost their homes during wars, others lost their land and crops to drought and some came to Narneen in search of a better life.

This is the story of two of Narneen's adolescents, Akilah and Carlos, who embarked on an adventure and discovered the importance of the role that all children and adolescents can play in their communities.

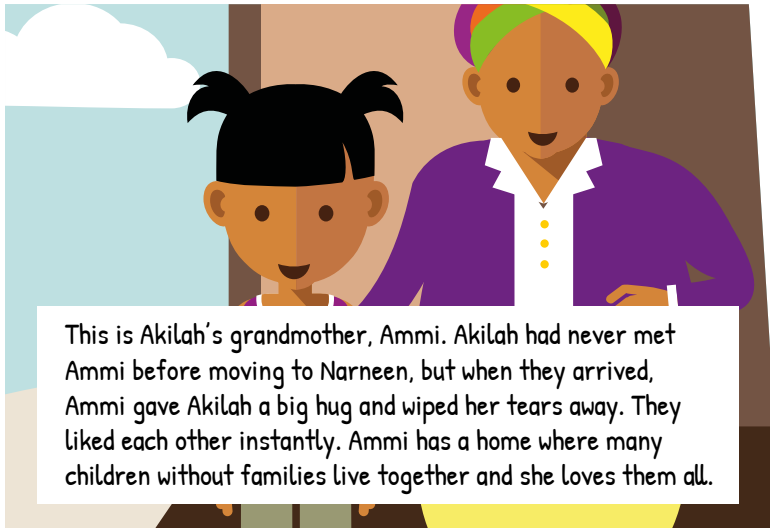
Stands for Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents. It also means "Ah, now I understand!". Every adolescent is unique, with different needs and concerns. AA-HA! are suggestions to governments to help them to make sure YOU understand your health-related rights, and that you are helped to have the best possible chance to survive, thrive, and be in a position to help to transform the society you live in.



Akilah is a 14-year-old girl and the eldest sibling in a family of five brothers and sisters.



Akilah travelled to Narneen when she was just 5 years old, in the back of a truck along with many other children who were tired, scared and hungry. War had killed their parents and destroyed their homes. She and her siblings came to Narneen to find their grandmother so they could live with her.



This is Akilah's grandmother, Ammi. Akilah had never met Ammi before moving to Narneen, but when they arrived, Ammi gave Akilah a big hug and wiped her tears away. They liked each other instantly. Ammi has a home where many children without families live together and she loves them all.

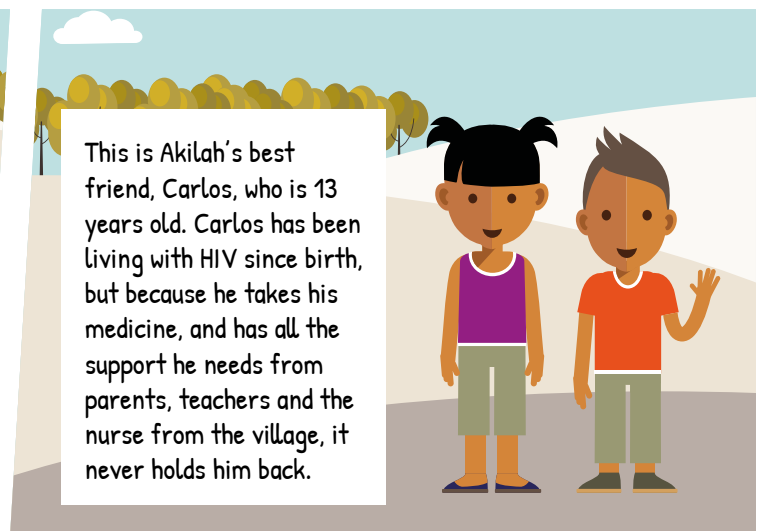


These are Akilah's siblings. Even though you're supposed to love your siblings equally, Akilah likes Marisa the best. Marisa is in a wheelchair and cannot use her legs.

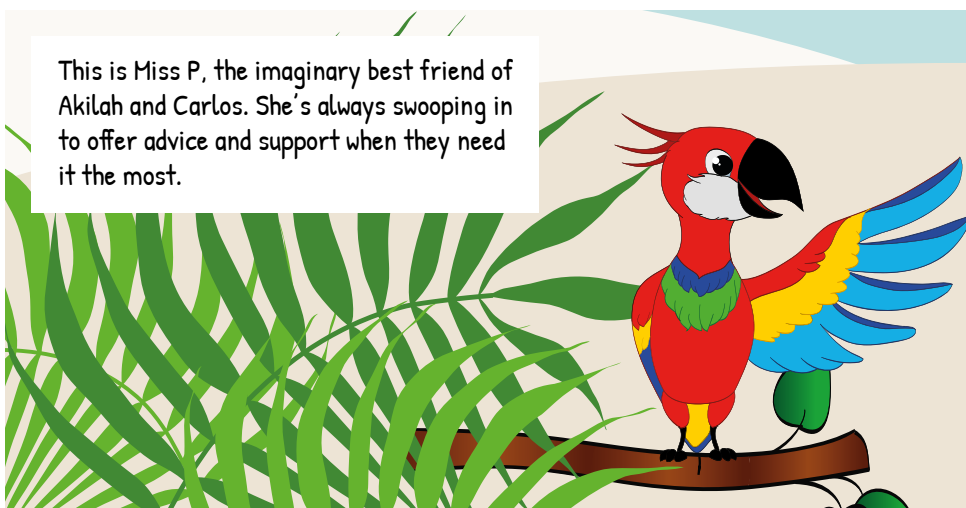


Akilah and Marisa share all their secrets and Akilah tells Marisa about what is going on in the community, since the village does not always have ramps and spaces for Marisa's wheelchair and she often has to stay at home.

Marisa therefore can't make the long journey through the forest to school by herself, so Ammi teaches her at home.




This is Akilah's best friend, Carlos, who is 13 years old. Carlos has been living with HIV since birth, but because he takes his medicine, and has all the support he needs from parents, teachers and the nurse from the village, it never holds him back.



This is Miss P, the imaginary best friend of Akilah and Carlos. She's always swooping in to offer advice and support when they need it the most.

Who is an adolescent?


"An adolescent is someone between the age of 10 and 19 years, between being a child and becoming an adult. During these years, lots of changes take place in our bodies and our minds. We grow and learn to manage our emotions and friendships, and acquire important knowledge and develop skills."



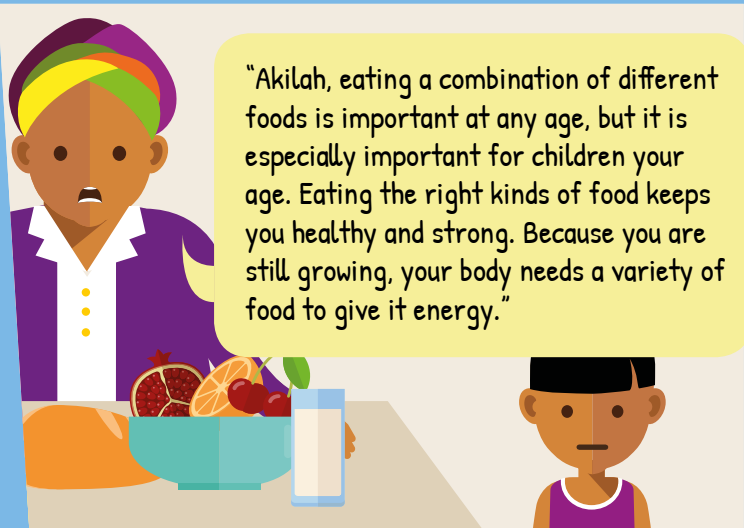
"Wake up! Breakfast is ready! You want time to play before school, don't you?"




As the oldest sibling, Akilah has to make sure everyday all the children have brushed their teeth, eaten breakfast and are ready for school.




"Ammi, why must I eat this? Can't I have just bread?"



"Akilah, eating a combination of different foods is important at any age, but it is especially important for children your age. Eating the right kinds of food keeps you healthy and strong. Because you are still growing, your body needs a variety of food to give it energy."



"Don't make a face at your food Akilah. If you want to stay healthy and not fall sick and miss school, it's important to eat nutritious food."



Akilah liked school, and she was lucky to be able to go to school. Marisa was not so lucky. She couldn't go to school because it didn't have special ramps for wheelchairs, and wasn't designed to cater for children with physical disabilities.

AA-HA!

What is AA-HA!?

AA-HA! is a guidance developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other UN partners to improve the health of adolescents. The WHO is an institution made up by governments to discuss the health of the world, and is part of the United Nations, where 194 countries work together to maintain international peace and security. AA-HA! gives governments advice on actions to make sure adolescents have the right to be healthy, to education, to decide who they want to be and to live a life without violence and fear. AA-HA! believes adolescents have an important role in their communities and society.

Three reasons why communities benefit when we care for our adolescents...

- The adolescents are more likely to grow up healthy and happy and to be able to take care of themselves better.
- Later on, when and if they choose to become parents, they can teach their children how to stay healthy.
- This helps to support and build strong communities that are able to fight poverty and inequality.



"I'm going to meet Carlos, Ammi, and then we will go to school. See you in the evening!"



"Oooo, the little sickly boy who can't play!"

"Don't call him that Rahim! He's not sick, and he can play. He just has to be careful about taking his medicine. And he can run faster than you!"



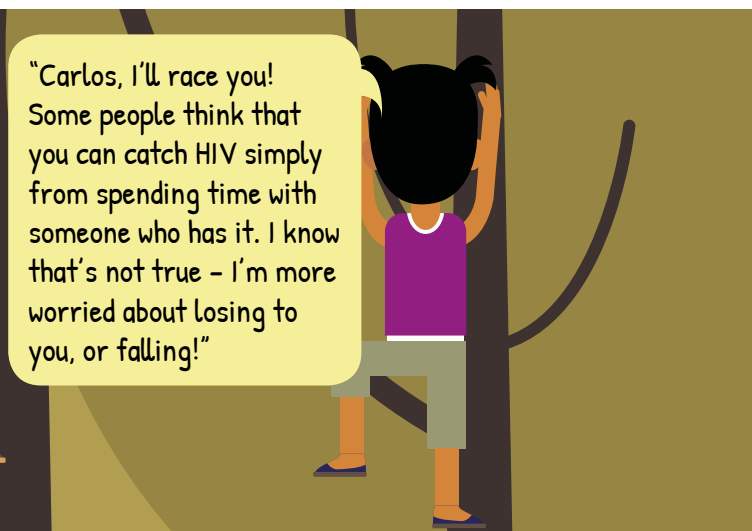
Rahim doesn't like Carlos, who he feels is different from the other boys in the village and gets special treatment.



Akilah always meets Carlos before school. They love climbing trees in the forest at the outskirts of Narneen, which is on their way to school.



"Ha, ha you can't beat me Akilah! I'm faster than you!"



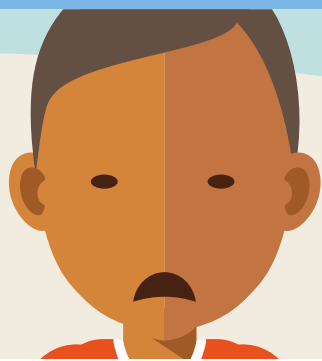
"Carlos, I'll race you! Some people think that you can catch HIV simply from spending time with someone who has it. I know that's not true - I'm more worried about losing to you, or falling!"



"That's right! I feel very lucky to have you Akilah and Miss P as friends."



"I wish Rahim didn't make fun of you."



"It is not just Rahim. Sometimes people make fun of me and I can see some children are scared of me."

His family had moved to Narneen because in their earlier village, people would make fun of him and not let him play with other children or go to school. Carlos had no friends there.



"Sometimes the fear and myths that are often related to living with HIV can be worse than the virus itself, so it's important that we treat Carlos as we would anyone else and make sure our friends do too."

Akilah agreed. She and Carlos kept running between the trees, trying to catch each other.



Akilah! Carlos! Wait!
You're going the wrong way!"

AA-HA!

- HIV cannot be transmitted between people by touching, hugging or kissing. The most common way of transmission is by having unprotected sex. You cannot tell if someone is HIV-positive on the basis of their appearance.
- With the right treatment and care, HIV can be managed and you can live a long and healthy life.
- Adolescents who live with HIV need proper care; without it, HIV can lead to AIDS, which can make you very ill and can even result in death.
- You should ask your doctor about the need to get tested for HIV.

HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus, which attacks the cells of your body that are in charge of protecting you from falling sick. If you don't identify it and treat it in time, HIV can lead to AIDS, a state where your immune system (that keeps you healthy) gets very weak and you can then get a number of infections, cancers and other diseases.

An hour later in the forest, it was clear that Carlos and Akilah were lost.

"...Carlos, we should hurry. They will be expecting us at school and Ammi will worry about us..."

"Where are we Akilah? It is so green here! This is nowhere close to our school. I think we took a wrong turn. This is amazing. Breathe in that fresh air! It's so clean, I have never seen water this clean. Fresh water makes me feel so ALIVE!"

"Me too! In Narneen, it is so difficult to carry water from the well to the house every day. Mansoor once drank some water from somewhere else and got very sick. He cried the whole night and had terrible stomach pain."

TRIP!

"ARGGGGHHHH!!!
My knee!"

"Oh dear! Carlos!
Are you ok?"

Carlos is worried. He remembers his mother saying that the dirt in the wound from a deep cut could make infection enter your body. He knows he has to seek help as early as possible.

"I'm fine Akilah, but my head hurts really badly and my ankle hurts badly too!"

Akilah was also worried. They had not reached their school, Carlos was hurt and they were lost and did not know where to go to get help. What would they do now?

"That looks bad Carlos. Do you see the sign up there?"

Sure enough, there was a sign on the path next to the road that said that there is a hole where the drain had broken.

"...You'll notice that sometimes local authorities make rules to stop us from walking in areas that are not safe. Like when there is a hole in the street. It is important to look out for these signs and to follow them. You are lucky this didn't make you fall in the road where you could have been run over by a vehicle or a bicycle."

Luckily, Akilah also spots a sign that says there's a health centre nearby.

"If I get hurt or I don't feel well, I sometimes tell you or Marisa, or sometimes Ammi, when I'm not scared to tell her. Sometimes I just don't feel like telling anyone at all."

"Who do you usually

"Why would you be scared to talk

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