

San Diego City Help Newsletter August 2002

Self Esteem and Dealing with the Herpes/ HPV Viruses

SELF ESTEEM could be the buzzword in mental health of our time, although that wasn't always so. I remember being asked to present a workshop on the subject in the early 1980's when self-esteem was hard to define because it was hardly a coined term. Today just about everyone uses it with a wide range of definitions.

Self Esteem is often generated by the power vested in another's esteem of us. Unfortunately too many of us use other people's judgment and opinion to dictate how we feel about our own personal self worth (and esteem).

One faction of people especially hard hit by "other esteem" is people who have chronic, recurring, sexually transmitted diseases such as herpes and HPV virus.

Over the years I have worked with many counseling clients who have been diagnosed and trying to come to terms with having these viruses. Almost everyone feels their self-esteem is affected by dealing with how another's opinion will impact them, i.e. they are other esteem worried and abandoning their own self esteem.

Having any chronic recurring illness is often hard to adjust to. Having a chronic illness/virus that involves sexuality and another person lends itself to "other esteem" and how they are going to be accepted or rejected for having it. Also at issue is when is the right time to tell another that they have this condition and the anticipation of possible criticism or rejection.

Self esteem or self love and self-acceptance is everyone's goal. People are challenged in many varying ways to achieve positive self-esteem. Some helpful ways to put you on the road to healthier self-esteem are:

1. Develop a positive internal dialogue/voice within yourself, ie. "everyone has something about themselves they wish they didn't". "If I am rejected for having this virus they aren't someone I would want in my life anyway."
2. Make a list of all the positive attributes and things that make you a unique and distinct individual.
3. Find a nurturing support group.
4. Take small steps to build a solid foundation of self-esteem.
5. Set small weekly goals to overcome the things you think you can't do.
6. Be accountable to someone, tell them what you are working toward and what you plan to accomplish that week.
7. Always acknowledge and appreciate yourself and your accomplishments.
8. Remember that you are human and that overcoming disappointment or adversity is process.

Self-acceptance can only come when we stop feeling victimized or punished and see gaining self esteem as an attainable process. If you learn to love and accept yourself, you may begin to see your human fallibility as a threshold to personal peace, personal freedom and personal growth.

Feel free to call me if you are stuck in any negativity while regaining or improving your own self-esteem; or with any other questions you may have.

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