free!

ReACT-Believe

The AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay Newsletter
Summer 1990 Volume III Issue III

The Thunder Bay Art Gallery presents . . .

Visual AIDS

August 31 - September 30, 1990

A travelling exhibition of AIDS posters from around the world at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery located beside Confederation College. The gallery is open Tuesday to Thursday from noon to 8:00 p.m., and Friday to Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m.

See images that are
shocking,
funny,
sensitive,
wild,
ridiculous,
poignant,
touching,
erotic,
sensual,
scarey,
frightening,
intelligent,
curious, and
- bizarre . . .

". . . uncover countries' deepest assumptions about sex, family, pleasure and national duty."
from "Condom Conundrum", Pg. 2.

Admission is FREE!

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Tidbits . . .

OAN

The quarterly meeting of the **Ontario AIDS Network** is scheduled to take place in Thunder Bay on July 6, 7 and 8 at the Thunder Bay Yacht Club. The OAN is an organization made up of 25 community-based AIDS service organizations in Ontario, of which ACT-B is a member. Also attending will be representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Health, Health Promotion Directorate, the Canadian AIDS Society, and the Federal Centre for AIDS.

The **PLWA/HIV Task Force** will be officially meeting for the first time on Friday. This group has been recognized by the OAN, and we are very excited about this, as there should be opportunities for local PLWA/HIV persons to participate.

The quarterly meetings enable the member groups to share information and work together in the fight against AIDS.

Yard Sale!

ACT-B's annual Yard Sale is coming up soon. We're looking for any donations of items for our sale. For pick up call 345-1516.

Volunteers, God Bless Them

Many will be shocked to find
When the day of judgment nears
That there's a special place in heaven
Set aside for volunteers.
Furnished with big recliners,
Satin couches and footstools,
Where there's no committee chairmen,
No group leaders or car pools,
No eager team that needs a coach,
No bazaar and no bake sale,
There will be nothing to staple,
Not one thing to fold or mail.
Telephone lists will be outlawed,
But a finger snap will bring
Cool drinks and gourmet dinners
And treats fit for a king.
You ask, "Who'll serve these privileged few
And work for all they're worth?"
Why, all those who reaped the benefits
And not once volunteered on Earth.

Planning Forum

The ACT-B Support Services Community Planning forum was held April 5th, 1990. After much preparation, anguish and mail listing it proved to be a great success. The purpose of the Forum was to obtain community input into planning what Support Services we should provide. About forty people attended from a wide variety of organizations. The afternoon was spent in small groups doing planning exercises.

The result of all this activity was a proposed list of 17 services. This list is being discussed at the Support Services Committee to decide how to proceed.

I would like to personally thank all the ACT-B staff and volunteers who worked hard to make this event such a tremendous success.

- Chris Mather

Volunteers Awarded!

The AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay annual Volunteer Recognition Event was held at the Thunder Bay Yacht Club on Sunday, May 6.

38 volunteers were presented awards for their dedication and service to ACT-B.

Special awards were presented to volunteers who contributed at least 50 hours of service to ACT-B in the past year and made significant contributions in a variety of capacities:

Coffee mugs:
Michael Chan
Marilyn Chicoine
Ed Galeotafiore
William Roberts
Bonnie Vermette
Crystal Pentney

Gold Pens:
Marion Bowers
Fern Campbell
Vic Chicoine
Jeanette Munshaw
Cindy Sundberg
Deb White

Blue Achievement Pins:
Norman Bowers
Dwight Gifford
Carl Gray
Norma Procter

Blue Achievement Pin and Gold Pen:
Barbara Reid

Silver Achievement Pins:
David Belrose
Terry Bryant
Cathy Powell

Are you interested in an AIDS presentation?

We can talk to your staff, community group, classroom, clients or to the general public about AIDS - what it is and what you need to know to prevent exposure.

We can also talk to you about workplace concerns, safer sex or a specific area you want to know more about.

For more information, contact Darcia Kohuska, Education Coordinator at 345-1516.

ACT-B Dictionary

ACT-B The AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay. A community-based AIDS Service Organization dedicated to confronting AIDS through education, advocacy and support.

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus - The virus believed to cause AIDS.

AIDS Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome - the immune system is disrupted by the HIV virus, leaving the body defenceless against opportunistic infections.

PLWA Person Living With AIDS

HIV+ having tested positive for HIV antibodies.

Library

The ACT-B Resource Centre Library has books and videos available on loan on a variety of issues surrounding AIDS. There are also a variety of free brochures and pamphlets available.

The library is open Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and it is located at 285 Bay Street.

Are you HIV+? Is someone you love HIV+?

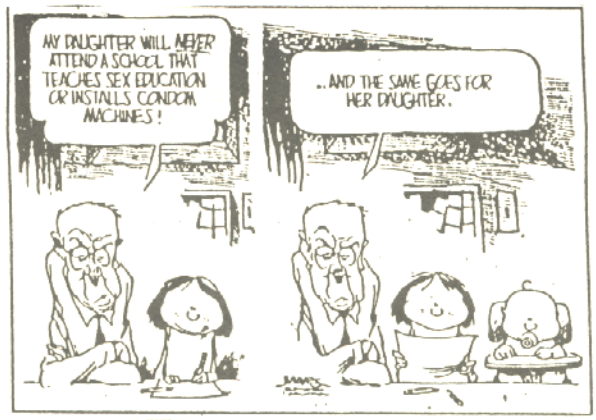
The AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay offers caring, supportive counselling for individuals and groups. Support Services also include assistance with daily living tasks, transportation, dealing with government agencies, as well as emotional support.

Contact Chris at 345-1516. Appointments outside the agency and evenings are always available.

All enquiries are confidential.

How the world is selling safe sex: condom conundrum

An extract from an article by David Talbot, Mother Jones, Magazine, January 1990



No human malady is more vested with symbolic meaning than AIDS. To view AIDS posters, pamphlets, and commercials from around the world - the global art of public health - is to uncover countries' deepest assumptions about sex, family, pleasure and national duty. In Israel, the virus is portrayed as a sinister looking Palestinian commando in classroom literature. In Poland, a country obsessed with economic erosion, unsafe sex has been depicted as a rust corroded bolt penetrating a stainless steel nut. In a poster produced by the New York radical feminist group Gran Fury, the viral terror takes the shape of a big ballistic erection, accompanied by the caption: "Sexism rears its unprotected head, AIDS Kills Women". It kills men too of course, but that half of the species is not Gran Fury's concern.

'. . . is to uncover countries' deepest assumptions about sex, family, pleasure and national duty.'

In most parts of the world, AIDS campaigns tend to address the public as misbehaving children and employ either fear or moral messages. For example, corpses and skulls are common images in these campaigns.

AIDS awareness material produced by gay groups and Scandinavian Health Ministries tend to counter these morbid, moralistic messages by stressing hope, eroticism, and humour. "Sex is Wonderful" rejoices a Danish safe sex poster that depicts a young naked couple in a delirious embrace. We know nothing of their marital status; all we know is that latex sex has never seemed so appealing.

It is in the U.S. that we see some of the world's cockiest safe sex propaganda produced by groups like the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. In these posters, naughty smooth skinned youths tug at each other's jockey shorts like tussling puppies and shamelessly display themselves wearing nothing more than Trojan sheaths.

However, none of this sauciness has been allowed to enter into the educational efforts of the U.S. government. While teens in suburban North America are chanting slogans like "Control Your Urging, Be A Virgin", kids in the Danish country of Funen are watching explicit condom instruction videos and are being handed "safe sex" kits. "Kids from twelve years and up are taught about safe sex" says condom coach Paul Madsen. "We bring dildos into the classroom and let them roll on the rubbers". Madsen is treated like Father Christmas when he shows up in Danish schools with his bag of safe sex goodies. But when AIDS activists from the group ACT UP! tried to distribute condoms recently in New York city high schools, they were run off campus like low life crack dealers.

Michael Hewlquist, program officer for AIDSCOM, has concluded that people are more likely to AIDS proof their lives when the educational campaign adopts a "more light hearted and upbeat approach. When safe sex information is presented in a cultural context, such as carnival songs or plays I've seen in Trinidad, it seems to sink in better with people".

Fortunately, there are growing signs of this creativitiy throughout the third world. A group called Puppets Against AIDS presents a safe sex Punch and Judy show on the streets of South Africa. The show is an effective way of reaching the country's black population, half of which are illiterate.

In Thailand, Dr. Mechai Viravaidya, the country's leading family planning expert has painted condom ads in bold white letters on the sides of elephants, and has convinced Buddhist monks to bless condoms in order to win them wider acceptance in the Thai countryside.

"Why do we get so embarrased about sex?" Viravaidya says as he hands out condom key rings and safe sex T-shirts. "We are all walking around with something between our legs".

Questions from the line

If I use a condom does that mean I'll never get AIDS?

Using a condom during anal, vaginal and oral sex greatly reduces your risk of HIV infection, other STD's and pregnancy! (now that's a lot in a little piece of latex!) It is important that you learn how to use a condom properly, as condom failure is usually due to improper use. Condoms rarely fail because of manufacturers defects. (Check out Consumer Reports on Condoms, March 1989 issue)

Here are some condom tips . . .

- Only use latex condoms - natural skin condoms don't prevent HIV transmission.
- Check the date on the condom package. Latex is a synthetic material, it usually has about a 3 to 4 year shelf life.
- Be careful when you open the package and put it on. It's fragile, so watch rings, fingernails etc..
- Pinch the reservoir tip or top half inch of the condom before rolling it on an erect penis. This provides space for the semen.
- Roll on and lubricate using a water based lube like K-Y. Don't use oil based products like vaseline or margarine, as they weaken the latex and may cause it to break.
- After ejaculation, hold onto the rim and pull out.
- Take the condom off and throw it away. Don't reuse a condom.

- Also, remember that practice makes perfect, so try them alone before you try them with a partner.

Try different brands until you find one you like.

For more condom information, contact your local AIDS committee or family planning centre.

AIDS Infoline 345-7233.

Editorial

confidential: spoken or written in confidence; entrusted with secrets; charged with a secret task

In March, I overheard information about a woman's positive HIV status in the emergency ward of a local hospital.

Everyone that is aware of a person's HIV status must be sensitive to the issue of confidentiality - this includes health care providers, social service agencies, AIDS service organizations, friends and family and anyone else that may have access to confidential information.

Confidentiality is vital because of the social stigma attached to AIDS. Breaking of the confidentiality agreement, whether it be written, spoken or understood, has the potential for serious repercussions for the HIV+ person in the form of a loss of housing or a job, being ostracized by friends, co-workers and even family.

All those with access to confidential information must not only keep that information from outside sources, but must not break confidentiality within the organization. Co-workers should be informed of a person's HIV status only on a "needs to know basis"
- watch your coffeetime talk!

Ask yourself:
- who has access to files?
- how do you identify yourself when phoning a person?
- are mailings confidential?
- who can overhear confidential personal and phone conversations?

Confidentiality is something we all need to keep in mind - and to ourselves.

Excerpts from the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay Confidentiality Policy.

" . . . credible service is based on trust, respect, sensitivity, and a high code of practice. Ensuring the confidentiality of privileged information is an important component of responsible and professional service delivery."

"As part of service delivery, it is necessary to share information with others within the workplace. The underlying principle is that all personal and health information related to an identified individual must be treated as confidential. This means that information of a confidential nature that is given, read, observed, overheard or otherwise acquired will be held as privileged information. It also means that agency personnel will not carry on a conversation about service users in the presence of persons who have no official need to know."

If your agency or organization is forming a confidentiality policy, contact ACT-B at 345-1516 for information and consultation.

ACT-B Advisory Council

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Darlene Binette — Coordinator, Community AIDS Program
Doug Broman — Producer, Thunder Gay Magazine
Nicky Clark — Infection Control Supervisor, P.A.G.H.
Joy Fedorick — Educator & Native Advocate
Mickey Hennessey — City Councillor
John McDonald — Lawyer
Mary McKenzie — Coordinator, Palliative Care, McKellar Hospital
Marie Portier — Residential Care Worker
Eleanor Richardson — Educator & TVO Regional Liaison
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Deb Patterson — Researcher /Writer Video Project
Michael Sobota — Executive Director

A duck walks into a pharmacy and says to the pharmacist, "I'd like a condom please". The pharmacist says, "Sure, do you want that on your bill?".

Canadians get into healthy fiber. . .

. . . Latex! Add a little fiber to your healthy sex diet.

The opinions and medical information offered by ReACT-Believe are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the staff or Board of Directors of the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay. Medical information offered by ReACT-Believe should be used with your own discretion. Please consult your doctor.

If you have any questions or comments please contact the Editor, Eileen Parker at (807) 345-1516 or write to P.O. Box 3586, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6E2.

Our office is located at 285 Bay Street.
We are open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To be on our mailing list call (807) 345-1516.

Nutrition & AIDS

An excerpt from a pamphlet by the Task Force on Nutrition Support in AIDS. This pamphlet is available at the ACT-B Resource Centre Library located at 285 Bay Street. For more information on nutrition, talk to your doctor or your dietician.

An Introduction

When the immune system is weakened, as it is with AIDS, it is particularly important to maintain good nutritional habits. Eating both the right amounts and the right types of food will give you energy, protein and other nutrients that will help give you strength and may improve your ability to fight infection.

Since your illness may make it more difficult to follow your regular diet, you will need to make greater efforts to insure you are getting enough protein and calories in your diet. Once you are familiar with ways to adjust your diet, you will be better able to meet the challenge of eating well.

You must first be familiar with the foods that make up a proper diet. Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to meet your daily nutritional needs. As you know, breakfast has always been an important meal. Because you may become more tired as the day progresses, or because of your medication, it will be extra important for you to have a healthy meal to get your day off to a good start.

Since infectious bacteria exist in the environment, you should take precautions to avoid the further complications they can cause. Always was all fruits and vegetables thoroughly. Cook meat well, avoid raw fish (sushi) and raw eggs (including homemade AL 721 preparations). Remember to purchase only pasteurized dairy products.

Also, it is important to avoid "fad" diets or products that promise to cure your illness. Special diets or fad regimes often do not provide the adequate calories, protein, vitamins or minerals needed by your body.

Surviving
(Always In Debt Syndrome)

There are some benefits to surviving with an AIDS diagnosis. One never has to worry about paying the high premiums for Life Insurance because as far as the Insurance Companies are concerned you're already dead. And if you are fortunate enough to already have Life Insurance then don't be late with those payments.

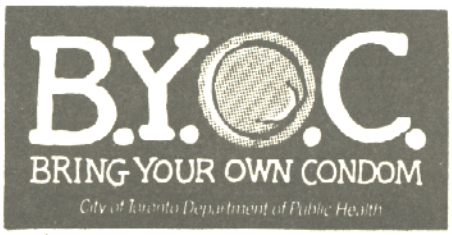
Did you ever scan through that real estate magazine and see this month's dream home? Well you can cross that dream off your list. Chances are the bank won't give you a loan because it's uninsurable.

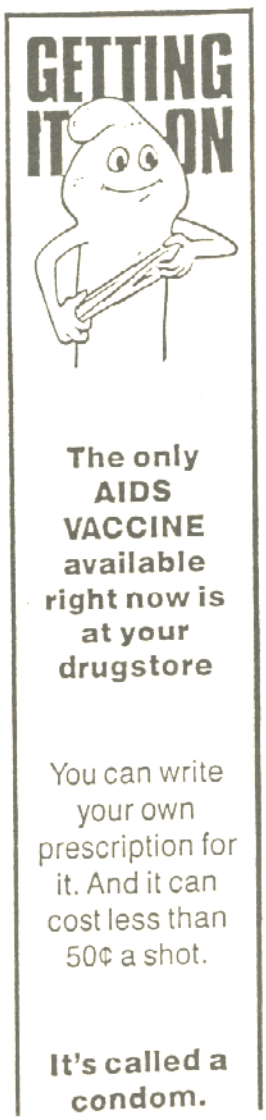
By the way, if you're still working I suggest you go out and apply for a few credit cards. Not that I can see you abusing them, but when money gets tight perhaps you can use them to buy essentials such as food. If you leave applying until you're no longer able to work you may as well not apply. Welfare recipients are labelled as dead beats with most major credit companies. It's not so much that you're a dead beat it's just that your level of income will not meet their level to qualify. Oh well, one's dignity stays intact so much better when we're dealing with C.O.D.

Another benefit of having AIDS is not having to rush out to the bank at the end of the year to choose that RRSP. After all why would a person with AIDS even consider a Retirement Savings Plan. When you have received your AIDS diagnosis a Canada Savings Bond with seven years to maturity even becomes a little risqué.

There is one major benefit to living with this illness, and that is that you become much more aware of the world that you live in. Minutes and hours take precedence in our lives for we have had to deal with our mortality or the lack of. Relationships and friendships have become important as we have stepped out of the fast lane of life. Survival is the number one priority at this time.

- Ron Rogers
Person Living With AIDS in Thunder Bay
P.O. Box 2554
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7B 6E2





CUEW Anti-HIV Discrimination Clause

The Canadian Union of Education Workers Local 5 recently won protection from HIV discrimination in their collective agreement.

The CUEW put forward an anti-HIV discrimination clause during their negotiations with Lakehead University. A representataive of CUEW consulted with ACT-B in preparation for the negotiations. ACT-B also provided an education inservice session for the bargaining team and others at Lakehead University.

The University already has a Workplace AIDS Policy in place.

CUEW reports that the Thunder Bay local is the first local to achieve the anti-HIV discrimination clause in contract negotiations outside of the Toronto area. The other union locals who have won this clause are at OISE and York University.

Video Project

Work is now in progress to develop two AIDS-related videos for the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay. Designed to fill in some of the gaps that exist around education issues, the project is funded by the AIDS Community Action Program (ACAP), of the Health Promotion Directorate, Health & Welfare Canada.

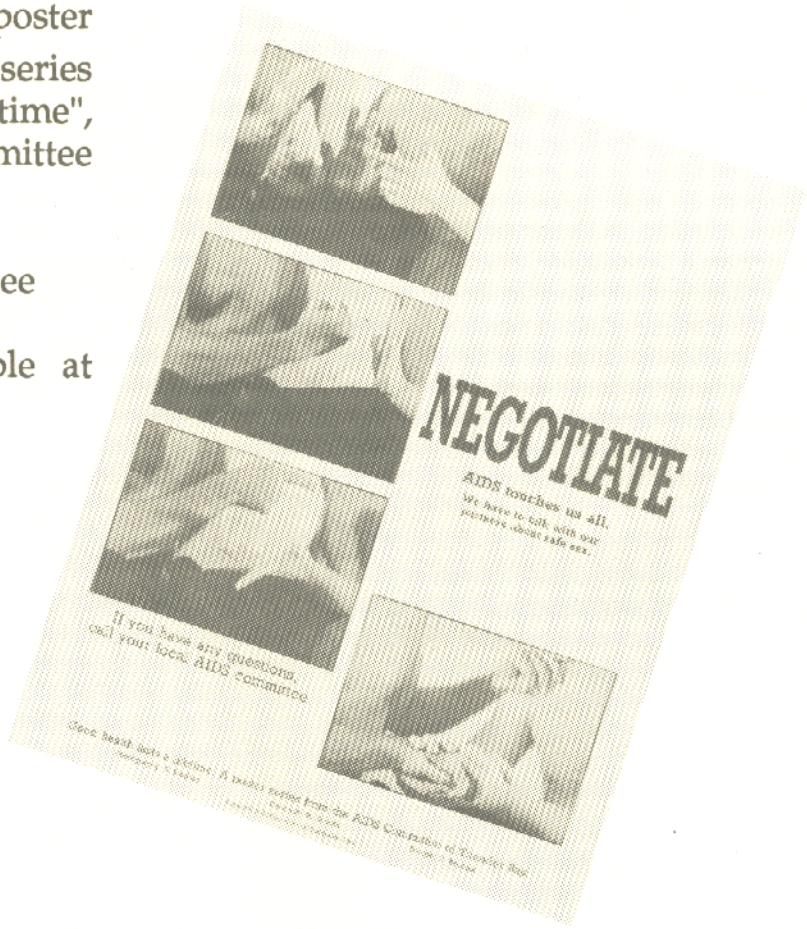
A Native AIDS video will introduce basic education concerns to Native people living in the more isolated areas of the region. Not only will the video clear up some of the myths about the spread of AIDS, viewers will be informed about the possible risks and preventative measures. As well, it is hoped that the material will lead to better understanding and perhaps introduce an atmosphere of increased compassion for affected individuals.

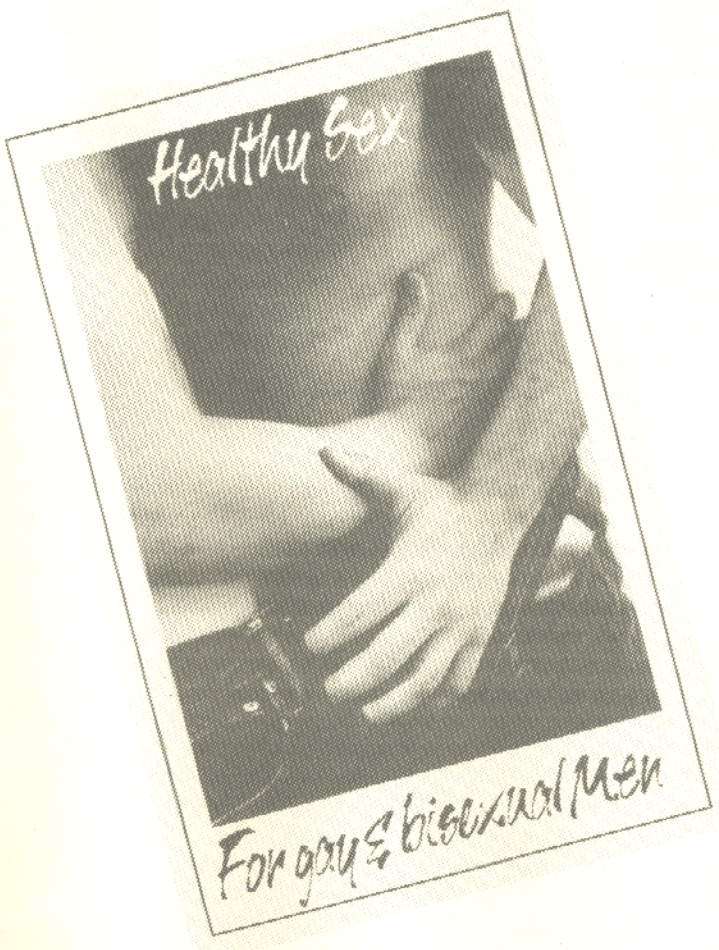
Women have been targeted for the second video which is a fictionalized account that presents basic AIDS information in an accessible manner with an emphasis on negotiating safer sex.

Running through June, July and August, the videos will be ready for distribution and airing by the end of August.

Negotiate is a new poster available as a part of the series "Good Health Lasts a Lifetime", produced by the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay.

Single copies are available free to post in your agency.
Volume orders are available at $2.00 per poster.





Healthy Sex for Gay & Bisexual Men

Men is a reprint of our highly successful 1988 brochure, with over 12,000 copies in circulation! The new edition boasts an all new design and photographs.

For prices and information contact Darcia Kohuska, Education Coordinator at (807) 345-1516.

Stress

In the last issue of ReACT-Believe we described a method of taking action to reduce the number of stressors in your life. In this column let's look at how to cope with stress-causing situations which can not be eliminated, such as long term illness.

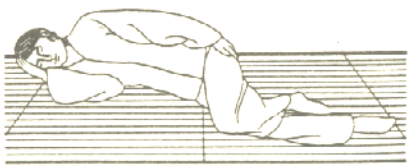
What we're talking about here are practices which if followed daily will reduce the effect stress has on you and will build your store of energy.

Meditation

When you hear the word *meditation* what comes into your mind? Do you picture an eastern guru sitting on a bed of nails? Don't worry, you don't have to be way-out to meditate. There are many forms and uses of meditation. What they have in common is a cleansing of the mind of the busyness of the day and the forming of a state of physical and mental peace. Such techniques have been used for centuries to assist people to heal themselves. What follows is a healing meditation using visualization techniques from "The Holistic Health Handbook" compiled by the Berkley Holistic Health Center.

A Healing Meditation

Lie down. Relax your body deeply, starting at the toes and working up the legs, the torso and arms, the neck, the face, all the way to the scalp. When you are sensing your relaxed body as deeply and gently as you can at that moment, locate whatever physiological problem you have. Visualize it, not necessarily accurately in terms of physiology, but in any way that makes sense to you: a tumor could be seen as a pile of sand to be removed by elves; a systemic infection as lumps to be strained out of the blood; a headache as a vise around the head which can eventually be loosened. Then visualize this image of your problem as melting, or being attacked, or loosening up, or being filtered out . . . in your own way.



Do this meditative visualization three or four times a day, each time sensing the current state of the health problem and letting whatever visual representation comes into your mind be transformed into a representation of well-being.

Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques are also used extensively to combat stress. The idea is that the mind and body are in a constant state of feedback with each other. Therefore, by being able to relax your body you will also be relaxing your mind. Why not try the following exercise.

1. Lie down on a firm but comfortable surface. If your bed is super soft maybe the couch would work. Some people find the floor most suitable.

2. Put yourself in a comfortable position. Many people use the position they are most often in just before they fall asleep.

3. Concentrate on the muscles of your right foot. Tense them as tightly as you can. Concentrate on really getting to know what it feels like for those muscles to be tense.

4. Relax your foot. Concentrate on enjoying the relaxation of your foot. Get to know the difference between relaxation and tension in that muscle group.

5. Repeat steps 4 & 5 with your left foot.

Now move on to other muscle groups. Most people use the following sequence, right foot, left foot, right calf, left calf, right thigh, left thigh, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, shoulders, neck, scalp, face.

Some people find that while they are relaxing a muscle, it helps to imagine it being drawn down towards the centre of the Earth, others visualized it as becoming lighter and lighter until it floats away. Caution: don't tense and relax a muscle group which you have recently injured, and don't jump up quickly after you've finished this exercise. Bring yourself back gently and calmly and slowly get up.

The goods on "The Works"

by Alexandre Highcrest
An excerpt reprinted with permission from Stiletto, the Prostitutes Safer Sex Project newsletter.

You've seen their ads in NOW: "Are you shooting up?. . . " The Works, the needle exchange at 660 Dundas West**. We've all heard about the place so I paid them a visit and here's what I discovered.

I dropped in on them in a rather clandestine manner; no mention was made of who I was, my CORP* affiliation, etcetera. I was simply a customer with two used needles to exchange.
They offered me clean needles at the rate of up to 10 to one. I wasn't asked if I was a user, or the user; I was simply asked how many needles I would like. I took 20 - why not? No other questions were asked, although the person minding the store was curious as to how I heard about the project. Lubed or dry condoms, condom wallets, small packets of personal lubricant, and bleach kits (which also contained condoms and personal lube) were also available free for the taking, along with the usual reams of safe-sex and safe-drug-use literature.

* Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes
** A street in downtown Toronto

HIV TESTING

Recent advances in drug treatment for AIDS are causing people to re-evaluate whether being tested for HIV is something they wish to consider. Because there was no treatment and because of social attitudes towards AIDS, many people did not see a reason to get tested. The success of AZT, in prolonging life for some, has resulted in its wider use. New drugs and treatment are becoming available that are helping people prevent illness. If you are thinking about having a test, there are many issues to think about. One of those is a common one: it deals with who will know about my HIV status.

HIV Antibody Test

This is a test that detects the body's reaction to HIV, the virus involved with AIDS. It is a highly sensitive test and provides the most reliable information on whether you have been infected with HIV.

Following are listed the types of tests, their degree of confidentiality and where these tests are available.

TYPES OF TESTING AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS

ANONYMOUS TESTING

A secret code is used to identify your blood. The staff at the test site do not know your name. It is not possible for the laboratory, the doctor or the public health department to know who you are. You are known only by your number.

CONFIDENTIAL TESTING

NOMINAL: This is where the testing clinic and laboratory, the doctor and the public health department know your name.

NON NOMINAL: You are able to choose with your doctor a special code and the code follows your blood sample to the laboratory. If your doctor is one that is trusted by the public health department to do counselling before and after the test, then the public health department will not ask for your name and address. If your doctor is not one that is known to do counselling, the public health department will ask for your name and address and will ask you to come for counselling. The public health department are within their rights to know the names and addresses of all those who use this method.

	CONFIDENTIAL		ANONYMOUS
	NOMINAL	NON NOMINAL	
Who will know my name and address?	The doctor, the medical staff, and the public health department.	The doctor, the medical staff, ***and*** the public health department *UNLESS* your doctor does pre and post test counselling.	NO ONE
Where can I go for testing?	Sexually Transmitted Disease clinic, your doctor.	Sexually Transmitted Disease clinic, your doctor.	In Ontario – only available at the Hassle Free Men's Clinic in Toronto. In Quebec – available at two locations in Montreal, one location in Quebec City.

WHERE TO GO

CONFIDENTIAL TESTING

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit
999 Balmoral Street
Monday and Friday
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.
No appointment necessary
Telephone: 625-5900

ANONYMOUS TESTING

This is not available in the Ottawa Region. It is available in Québec, however, and available to ALL. Please telephone for an appointment.

CLSC Metro Montréal
AIDS Intervention Centre
Telephone: (514) 934-0552

Bilingual Services —
9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In Toronto: —
Hassle Free Men's Clinic
For appointment:
(416) 922-0603
Hours:
Mon. 4-9 p.m. Thu. 10-3 p.m.
Tue. 10-3 p.m. Fri. 4-7 p.m.
Wed. 4-9 p.m. Sat. 10-2 p.m.

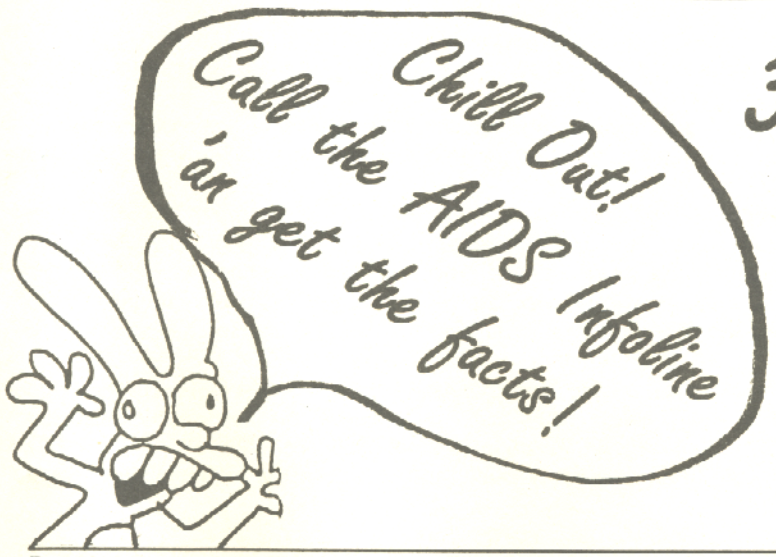
CLSC Centreville
rue Bleury, Montréal
Telephone: (514) 861-6644

Primarily francophone —
9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Québec City Info-Santé
Équipe de Prévention et de Dépistage,
Infection à VIH et SIDA
Telephone: (418) 648-2626
Doctors by appointments

You may be asked for the first three digits of your postal code. This is to identify your home region only.

For more information on testing, call the AIDS Infoline at 345-7233.



345-SAFE

That's 345-7233.

Talk to real people, weekdays.
We don't have to know your name.
In the evening, you can listen to a taped message.

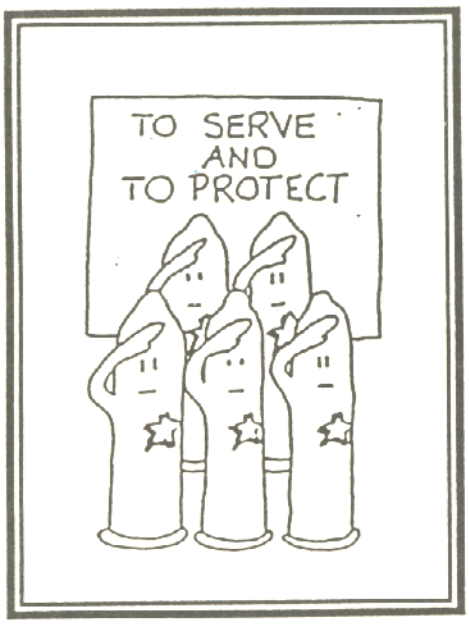
Lab Safety

by Susan Ivany

"AIDS has forced laboratory workers to take a hard look at techniques that may put themselves or patients at risk."

I work as a laboratory technologist in a local hospital, and have been employed in the same lab since 1980. I have seen changes take place in the lab over the past ten years as a direct result of the AIDS crisis.

Early in the '80's there was some hysteria among health care workers, lab staff included. AIDS has forced laboratory workers to take a hard look at techniques that may put themselves or patients at risk.



I believe that among most of my colleagues a sensible middle ground has been reached, where proper but not ridiculous precautions are routinely taken. This has come about only by staff familiarizing themselves with safer procedures and learning more about AIDS and HIV.

The risk of exposure to infectious diseases has always been a part of this job. The AIDS crisis has forced us to take a critical look at our procedures. The most apparent changes are in the area of infection control and lab safety:

One example of this is the recapping of needles. Our blood collection trays are now equipped with sharps containers so that it is never necessary to re-cap a used needle. With a sharps container, the adaptor and needle twists off. When the container is full and ready for disposal, the lid is snapped so nothing can come out or go in. This has reduced needle-stick injuries significantly.

Lab staff now use vinyl or latex gloves when handling or taking blood. They have become so routine, that I could thread a needle wearing them now!

Isolation procedures are now routine. The lab technician may pose a danger to the person with AIDS. The lab technician wears gloves, a gown and mask to protect the patient from any opportunistic infections that the lab technician may pass to the patient.

Biohazard bags are now used for transporting samples to the lab.

Even within the last five years, lab staff were eating and smoking in the lab! Another routine that we never thought twice about was getting a fluid sample to the top of a pipette by using mouth-suction. The proper procedure now is to use a suction-bulb to draw the fluid to the top.

I believe that protection from all infectious diseases is more scrupulous than it has ever been. Lab staff are now using precautions that should have been taken years ago. You know what they say, "Better late than never"!

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"The Caring Profession"

by Lisa Coulouris R.N.

As a registered nurse. I have looked after patients with AIDS in a hospital setting. What is it like to care for people with AIDS?

I found it to be a challenge; one in which I enjoyed. Keeping a person with AIDS comfortable, clean, hydrated and free from new opportunistic infections is no easy task. At the same time, it is a rewarding experience. My patients appreciated little extras done for them. When they would have two hours of uninterrupted sleep after a relaxing massage, I knew I was doing my best, treating them with the compassion, respect and dignity they deserved. That in itself was a reward.

It can also be a trying experience, not because of the patients, but some staff. Because of the debilitated state of most of these patients, two nurses are usually needed to carry out general nursing care. Most staff were more than eager to help without question. They were fantastic in they way they approached all patients with genuine care and concern.

Unfortunately, a few were just the opposite. I was absolutely shocked at the attitude of some of the nurses I encountered. One flatly refused to enter the room, stating, "Find someone else to help you" (She was not busy at the time).

At a time when patients need a lot of support, I found instead, much discrimination among my colleagues. Comments such as "I wish those gays wouldn't visit here", and "They shouldn't let AIDS patients help themselves to the pantry - they might touch the food" were just a few of the things I heard. One evening I needed help washing my patient's hair. I asked several nurses before someone would help. The responses were: "I can't, I might miss my break", "I don't want to bring that (AIDS) home to my family" and "What does he need his hair washed for - he's not going anywhere".

It is only a few nurses I am speaking of, but to me even just one nurse with such attitudes is too many.

There is a lot of fear of AIDS - even within the medical profession. Therefore, I feel that more education is needed. Inservices on AIDS for staff should be mandatory for all personnel working with AIDS.

Hopefully, with more education, the fear of AIDS will decrease, so all patients, regardless of diagnosis or sexual preference will be treated equally.