



AIDS: WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW:

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

1. There have been 85,000 reported cases of AIDS, 50% have died.
2. There is an estimated one to two million infected with the virus.
3. People with the AIDS virus die of infections and not of the virus itself. The two most common opportunistic infections are *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP) and Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), a form of cancer.
4. When you are sexually intimate with anyone you are not only sleeping with that individual but with all of the people that he or she has slept with, and with whom they have slept with, for the past five to seven years.
5. Of all the AIDS cases reported, 10% are women. Half of these women contracted the virus from IV drug abuse and half from intercourse.
6. The active ingredient in spermicides, nonoxynol 9, has been found to kill the AIDS virus. Foams and jellies containing this ingredient should be used in conjunction with latex condoms to provide a more effective barrier against the AIDS virus.
7. SELF HELP HOTLINES:
AIDS Hotline: (800) 342-2437
National Gay Task Force: Crisis line: (800) 221-7044
San Francisco AIDS Foundation: (415) 864-4376
AIDS Action Committee: (617) 437-6200

Communication in Intimate Relationships

by Beverly McCreary

Intimate communication involves two people sharing all aspects of themselves—the good and bad, the scary and confident, the silly and serious. Real intimate communication can only occur when two individuals are willing to be honest with themselves and present this side to the other person. Unfortunately this type of communication is often interrupted by the individuals' own insecurities.

Effective communication begins with the willingness to be honest with ourselves. This consists of looking within ourselves for our real feelings and reactions. In the beginning this may take a conscious effort. It may be necessary to set some quiet time aside to relax and concentrate on how you honestly feel about a particular problem or issue in your life. In their book, *Being Intimate*, John and Kris Amodeo describe the "Focusing process." This process is designed to facilitate getting in touch with your true feelings. Such a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article, for those interested I refer you to chapters four and five.

Once an individual is aware of his/her

true experience he/she must learn to express and share these feelings. It is through this type of sharing that intimate relationships are established. This however, can be a scary prospect, reaching out to someone and exposing your vulnerable side. The anxiety behind this step can be lessened by first establishing a relationship based on trust. This foundation of trust should be comprised of a willingness to be honest with each other, accepting and respecting each other as individuals, with strengths and weaknesses.

A relationship based on trust and true experience doesn't mean that the two individuals never argue or disagree. It is impossible for two individuals to maintain a close relationship, remain honest to their true experiences and never disagree. The idea is to disagree with a person without degrading the person for not seeing things our way. John and Kris Amodeo outline three aspects necessary for effectively communicating dissatisfaction.

The first step involves getting in touch with what is really bothering you. They recommend being as specific as possible. This may require that you take some extra time to define the problem

for yourself.

The second step involves expressing what you have come up with to the other person. Again this should be done as specifically as possible. Describe how you feel and see the situation, without adding judgmental comments, these comments tend to put the other person on the defensive. For example, instead of saying, "When you get stubborn and defensive, I feel frustrated," say, "When you respond very quickly to a concern I have, I feel frustrated."

The third step involves asking the other person for what you need. This may feel awkward at first. However, providing this information allows the two of you to discuss how to better approach similar issues in the future. The third step in the above example would involve offering an alternative to "a quick response." For example, "If I bring up a concern when you are busy, tell me and let's arrange a good time to talk."

This process of effective communication allows us to be honest about who we are and what we feel. It also establishes a way for us to communicate these feelings to another. Ultimately this leads to more fulfilling and rewarding forms of communication.