

# **BCPWA's Principles on Sexual Health for HIV+ Persons**

## **Introduction**

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality. In fact, some people consider the sex drive to be a basic human instinct, comparable to other needs of survival such as the pursuit of food and security. Sexuality encompasses the physical, physiological, psychological, social, emotional, cultural and ethical dimensions of sex and gender. These factors can have life-long positive and negative influences on one's sexual behaviour and relationships.

Sexual health involves the capacity to enjoy and control sexual and reproductive behaviour in accordance with a social and personal ethic. The expression of one's sexuality involves an interplay between personal desires, and the requirements and rights of others and of society. Complicating one's sexual health and expression is the onset of HIV disease and AIDS.

BCPWA believes in and advocates for the recognition of the worth and dignity of the HIV+ individual. This includes the right of the person living with HIV to have a healthy and fulfilling sexual life in a mature and responsible manner.

## **Guiding Principles for HIV Positive Sexual Health**

Only recently has the sexual well-being of persons living with HIV been discussed. Our sexual health is as important as that of HIV negative or untested people. Persons living with HIV are central to developing effective prevention programs. We are essential players in the prevention of HIV, but are not wholly responsible for the transmission of HIV. HIV+ persons are not an homogeneous group whose needs can be universally addressed.

BCPWA's mission to empower, support and advocate for persons living with HIV and AIDS, complements the ideals for HIV+ sexual health. BCPWA envisions a community whereby HIV+ persons can live free from stigma and discrimination; HIV+ persons act on informed choices; and where our healthy sexual lives are dignified and respectful, and free from fear, shame, guilt, and false beliefs.

Four major guiding principles to BCPWA's vision include:

- 1) Self-governance

HIV+ persons must be decisively involved in the development, delivery and evaluation of their own interventions. Whenever appropriate, community partnerships will be pursued.

## 2) Participation/Empowerment

As a part of the general community, HIV+ persons are also a part of the solution to the issues and challenges affecting all aspects of our lives. Persons living with HIV shall not be marginalized, isolated, excluded or alienated from the management of our overall health.

## 3) Ethics

All communities must protect and promote human rights and ethical questions. All persons have the right to privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, freedom from discrimination and the duty to do no harm.

## 4) Community Support

Programs and services must be available and accessible to HIV+ persons in order for us to maintain our physical, emotional, mental and sexual well-being. Communities must be sensitive to gender-related issues, and respectful of all socio-economic subcultures within the HIV+ community.

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