



The Positive Side

Positive Women's Network
www.pwn.bc.ca

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World AIDS Day 2004

When Love Hurts

December 1st is World AIDS Day. This year the focus is women, girls, HIV and AIDS and the key question is "Have you heard me today?" to publicize women's realities. Women account for half of the HIV infections in the world, yet they still have so few choices in preventing more. The female condom is not perfect, even for women who can access it. Microbicides (gels or creams women can use in their vaginas to protect themselves from HIV) are still only in development. There are barriers to treatment for all women, including expectant mothers. Inability to control sexual relationships is another piece of the puzzle.

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Have you ever said yes to sex when you didn't want it, but your boyfriend* did? Maybe after saying you just didn't want it (for any reason that is yours) you finally thought, "Oh what the hell," because you were too tired to argue about it anymore. Or too ashamed because he said there's something wrong with you for not wanting sex. Or too sore from where he hit you. What the hell- it wouldn't last that long and you could just get through it, right?

So how do you talk about safer sex with a partner who insists on sex whether you want it or not, even if it takes an insult, a threat, a slap to get you going? Forget trying to tell

*or your husband or your girlfriend or your date; whatever fits for you.

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him he has to use protection. You try every time, but you can only say it so often. It becomes too much of a risk. You might end up with no money to buy food, and you and the kids will be hungry for another week. Or you might end up with another bruised rib where he kicked you. No one but you can see it, but you both know it's there and you both know what it means: he got you one more time, as he always boasts he can.

So you think about safer sex and you feel guilty, that it's your fault you didn't insist on using condoms to protect yourself and him from further infection. Even if you're both already positive, you know it's a good idea. If you could just figure out how to make it work. If you just had something to protect yourself with, something that didn't involve your partner. If you just were a better/smarter/stronger person, you would make it work. Maybe he's right. You really aren't all that great.

If you ever feel like this, you're not alone. What you are experiencing is sexual violence. It might be hard to imagine it could happen to you. But it could. And you don't deserve it.

Sexual violence happens to girls and women all over the world. It is about power and control of one partner over the other. Sometimes it involves control through the use of the threat of violence ("If you don't have sex with me now, I'll pin you to that wall."). Sometimes it

involves intimidation ("Do you realize how much stronger I am than you? You should listen to what I say"), or humiliation ("You are so ugly, you are lucky to have me. No one else would want you. Especially now that you have HIV."). Sometimes it involves actual physical violence- slapping, hitting, punching, and in the worst cases, murder.

For many reasons, women and girls find themselves in situations where they do not have power or control in their own lives. Girl children are vulnerable to adult members of the family for survival, and

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No one deserves it.**

the adult exploits the child by sexually assaulting her and then shaming her into silence ("It's your fault for making Daddy feel so good"). Grown women are vulnerable because they depend on their partners for money or emotional support, because they have a family together.

Practicing safer sex can be difficult for women who are in sexually violent and potentially explosive relationships. Because women don't have the option of actually wearing a condom, they can't always ensure a man does. Even female condoms, which are worn inside a woman's vagina, can be

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whisked aside without a woman's knowledge.

If you are in a relationship where you are being forced into sex, either through words or action, you are not alone. And there is help. It can be hard to talk about the most private areas of your relationship, especially when they involve admitting that your intimate partner says what a mess you are, and how unworthy of attention. But whoever tells you this is wrong.

Women are strong, and women can speak out, even when beaten. The violence is not your fault. Read it again: it is *not* your fault. And someone wants to listen.

Resources

VictimLink (24 hour Crisis line 7 days a week) 1.800.563.0808 anywhere in BC or TTY 604.875.0885

PWN (Mon-Fri 9-4) 604.692.3000 or 1.866.692.3001 anywhere in BC.

HIV, Women and Girls: Why the risks?

Women are more likely to be infected with HIV during sexual intercourse than men.

When the friction of sex causes tiny tears inside the vagina, there is more possibility of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Girls' reproductive tracts tear more easily than women's as they are not fully mature and do not produce the same amount of secretions for natural lubrication.

When semen stays inside the vagina, the time of exposure to HIV is longer than it is for men.

Females are more likely to have older sexual partners who have had more partners and more likelihood of exposure to infection.

Updates and Events

Quick Calendar (see details below)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Drop-in Closed	Drop-in open 11:30-3:30	Drop-in open 11:30-3:30	Drop-in open 11:30-3:30	Drop-in open 11:30- 3:30
	Lunch 12-2	(Closed on Cheque Issue Wednesdays)	Yoga: 11:30-12:30	
	Foodbank 12-2		Lunch : 12-2	
			Taking A Break support group: 6PM Call ahead for dates.	

Foodbank

The Foodbank is open Tuesdays, and there is no pick up on any other day. The foodbank is closed the day before cheque issue (November 24 and December 22).

Yoga classes

Yoga Outreach will be offering classes to members starting October 21. Thursdays 11:30-12:30. Join us afterwards for lunch.

Taking a Break

The TAB support group runs most Thursdays. Please call Sangam at 604.692.3006 for dates.

Deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is December 3.

Watch for your **Holiday Bulletin** in the mail by the end of November. We have a couple of treats in the works...

Welcome to the PWN Community...

Welcome to **Funke Adebajo**, our newest board member. Call for the board meeting schedule if you are interested in meeting the whole crew.

Welcome to **Tamara**, our new placement student from UBC. Tamara will be in on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Holiday Hours

We will be closed on the following days: November 11 and 22.

December 22, 24, 27, 28, 31. We will be open December 23, 29 and 30.

We'll reopen with regular hours January 4.

Period Power! Get to know your cycle

Do you freeze when the doctor asks about your menstrual cycle? You wouldn't be the only one if you admitted that you're not sure what to count and when. For everyone who has felt the sweat even while wearing a cold paper gown on the doctor's table, here are some period pointers to make you a pro.

- A menstrual cycle is counted from the first day of bleeding to the day before your next period starts. Your first day of bleeding is Day One of each cycle.
- Menstrual bleeding can last from 3-7 days.
- Menstrual blood does not usually contain clots. If yours does, talk to your doctor.
- Menstrual cycles range from 21 to 40 days. Not all women menstruate every 28 days.
- Menstrual bleeding occurs approximately every month unless a woman is pregnant.
- There are three phases in a menstrual cycle: follicular (when the ovum or egg is developing), ovulatory (when the ovum is released) and the luteal phase (when the body either nourishes the fertilized ovum or prepares for menstruation).
- Ovulation (the release of an ovum or egg for fertilization) occurs approximately half way through a cycle, but the actual day varies for every woman, so don't depend on counting days for avoiding or getting pregnant! Get to know your cycle and signs of fertility.
- The end of a woman having periods is called menopause. After menopause, a woman can no longer get pregnant. (The start of a girl having periods it is called menarche. This signifies her body can become pregnant).

Changes in your period can be a symptom of HIV (research hasn't discovered why this happens, but lots of women with HIV have changes in their periods). Even though it is common, report all changes in your period to your care provider.

Connecting with Positive Women's Network

in person

#614-1033 Davie Street, Vancouver
(between Burrard and Thurlow)

by mail

1033 Davie Street, Suite 614
Vancouver, BC V6E 1M7

by phone

604.692.3000 (local)
1.866.692.3001 (toll-free in BC)

by fax

604.684.3126

by email

pwn@pwn.bc.ca

online

www.pwn.bc.ca
www.pwn-wave.ca

Positive Women's Network supports women living with HIV/AIDS to make informed choices about their health. We provide safe access to HIV/AIDS-related support, advocacy and education/prevention to women and their communities throughout British Columbia, Canada.

support program

Bronwyn Barrett - Support Program Coordinator-604.692.3008- bronwynb@pwn.bc.ca
Sangam - Support Worker. - 604.692.3006 - sangamg@pwn.bc.ca
Cara Moody - Oak Tree Outreach Worker - 604.692.3007 - caram@pwn.bc.ca

communications and education

Janet Madsen - Communications Coordinator-604.692.3009- janetm@pwn.bc.ca
Jeannie Lowe - Resource Coordinator - 604.692.3011 - jeannie@pwn.bc.ca
Bronwen Tigar - Young Women's Prevention Coordinator - bronwent@youthco.org

administration

Marcie Summers - Executive Director - 604.692.3010 - marcies@pwn.bc.ca
L' Hirondelle Financial Services - Bookkeeping - 604.692.3000

The information provided herein cannot replace the information provided by a medical professional.

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