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Persevere

Teaching and Inspiration for Better Health

In Search of Support

Iya Agba

As a listener, I hear complaints all of the time about the need for support and the lack of it in people's personal lives. Many long to be part of a group where everyone comes together and helps one another fulfill their dreams and become A better person.

A support system comprises of many people who play various roles in our lives. It is not always just friends and family; it extends to co-workers, neighbors and, even strangers. Because of this, our needs and ideas regarding support are constantly changing and require, like all relationships, dedication and work.

It takes time to build a support system. It takes time to learn about the people in your life. We are constantly changing and the person you are today is not necessarily who you will be tomorrow. A support system has to be able to withstand those changes of perspective, while still being flexible to the needs of its members. Otherwise it cannot maintain itself.

I am part of a circle of

women that I call affectionately the Afro Zen Amazon (AZA). We have known each other collectively for over five years, but it feels like a lifetime. I have experienced some of my best moments with these women and they have listened to me rant, cry, yell and scream. We meet around the full moon, check in weekly and keep each other motivated. Sounds lovely doesn't it? The truth is...we are brutally honest with one another, and sometimes feelings get hurt. Even as I write this, everyone is dealing with individual and personal challenges that have created tension and made it hard to connect. We are hardly speaking to each other while we individually process our current situations and I am feeling extremely disconnected.

Sometimes we need to handle things on our own and support ourselves, and sometimes we need to forgo being supported for the good of the group. It is all about choices in the end. I know that there is very little I can do for my sisters right now for various reasons, but it doesn't mean I don't love them and they don't love me. The trick to sustaining a support system is being honest

about what you can give. It really boils down to choices. If you want to be supported, you have to support from a place that is honest and strives to do better. Every support system is susceptible to outside influences, so the idea that conflict can be limited is fantasy at best. A truly functional system accepts that things will be challenging at times, but doesn't allow those outside influences to get in the way of the love.

We cannot predict when we will need each other, but if we accept the humanity in us all and remember not to take things personally, we can create very functional and loving systems that will help guide, protect and push us when we forget ourselves. At some point, my crew will meet up and everyone will share their experiences. We will be honest about our hurt and pain and there will be tears. By the end, things will be renewed, breaches sealed and it will be like we never parted.

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**VOLUME 1
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The Importance of Community

Gina-Marie Cheeseman

The dictionary defines community as “the condition of having certain attitudes and interests in common.” When you are going through difficult times in your life it is important to be part of a community of loving people who can help share your burden.

In several of his New Testament letters to early Christian churches, the Apostle Paul encouraged believers to love and help each other. Writing to the church in Galatia, he told the Galatians believers to “Bear one another’s burdens.” Galatians 6:2

Written early in Paul’s missionary career, he

would later come to know intimately the importance of community, while spending the last years of his life in jail and depending on fellow believers for the comfort of their visits. This is evidenced by the letter he wrote to the church in Colossae, where he told them to, “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:14

American culture teaches the opposite of what Paul taught, and growing up we are often told, “God helps those who help themselves.” However, God created us to need each other, and like Paul and the early Christians we need the love and help of a community

Original Paintings by Artist Letitia Lee
www.leemeeart.com



Don’t Forget To Touch

Dawn Bryant

As a child, when you fell and hurt yourself it was your mother or father that came to you, kissed you, held you and made you feel as if everything would be alright. Touch is one of the most important parts of our lives. Receiving a hug from a loved one, a kiss from a lover, even a handshake from a stranger has an important place in our lives.

For people that suffer from HIV/AIDS, touch can become a distant part of their lives. As we gain more knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the effect the disease has on the human body, we are becoming more aware of how to prevent the spread of the HIV virus. With the increasing advances in medicine people with HIV/AIDS are living longer healthier lives.

I remember watching a documentary on woman living with the HIV virus and how, with

medicine, they were living out their lives. Yet, one thing they all had in common that was the lack of touch. Each woman that was interviewed expressed the lack of physical intimacy. Establishing relationships with others was a difficulty they now all shared. They expressed how hard it was to approach the subject with new people they meet in their lives. As I watched the documentary, it became clear to me that these women truly now understood the importance of touch in their lives and how they missed it when it was not there.

The touch of another person when you are suffering though a difficult time has the ability to lift your spirit. But imagine if you have a disease that most people don’t understand and have a fear of. For you, a caring touch could be something you may not receive regularly. You

would relish the simple handshake from a stranger; the hug from a loved one would mean the world to you. More than money or fame, a simple touch could move you to tears. In life, the gift of touch is a necessity. It is something we all take for granted when we receive it on a regular basis. People that live with HIV/AIDS often feel as if they are lepers, outcast in a society where the disease they suffer from can cause people to see the disease rather than to see the individual. All of us in this life are in need of a helping hand; giving to someone in need is the key to living a balanced and fulfilled life. For people suffering from HIV/AIDS it’s important that they receive the gift of touch. It’s important, I believe, to reach out to these individuals letting them know that they are people outside of their illness. To let them know that they are seen, that they are appreciated, and most importantly they are loved.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Michael Baisden is asking all to attend the sentencing of the **Jena 6, young black boys on September 20,2007.**

These boys could go to prison for life after participating in a high school fight against white students.

If you are unable to show up and send a message about Racism, Michael Baisden asks that we all wear black that day for unity.

Also, send a silent or loud prayer to those young men who are fighting racism on behalf of us all.

Learn the facts at

www.minglecity.com.

Make a educated decision about whether you want to support either by traveling to attend, signing petitions or just writing your congressman.

You know what is right!

Look Beyond the Surface

Carla Thorpe

The saying “you can’t judge a book by its cover” holds more-true today than ever before. It is impossible to tell, just from the outside (white, black, Hispanic, etc.) what a person’s character, mind and personality is like. They are a mystery and to create a picture of them with the first thing that comes to mind is surely ignorance.

Certainly we know that in our heads but does our knowledge translate to action? When we find out a person has HIV what do we say? Do we treat them differently because of their current circumstance?

Once you meet or know someone with the disease, you can truthfully answer this question. It is not enough to “have a friend that has a friend” or see a story on the news about someone with the disease. To have a genuine

answer, you have to experience it first hand. In reality, you never know how you will feel and act until it’s you, someone you love, or someone that is close to you.

So, instead of “judging a book” visit a clinic, volunteer with a support group or just do something to help a brother and sister in need. No matter what, take some action instead of walking away. It is much easier to walk away without thinking about the feelings and needs of the people we are walking away from. Let that not be you.

Know, love, share and help someone in one way or another, even if they do have a deadly virus. Make the choice to step out of the box of what is comfortable and into a world where people need your help.

“No matter what, take some action instead of walking away.”
-Carla Thorpe

Other Resources

Centers for Disease Control HIV/AIDS Information Site
<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/default.htm>

Healing Well Site
<http://www.healingwell.com/AIDS/>

AIDS.gov
<http://www.aids.gov/>

HIV Treatment Brochure
http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/ContentFiles/HIVandItsTreatment_cbrochure_en.pdf

100 Ways to Respond to HIV/AIDS
<http://unworkplace.unaids.org/UNAIDS/basics/100tips.shtml>

Women’s Stories of Living with HIV
<http://www.avert.org/womstory.htm>

The AIDS Clock
http://www.unfpa.org/aids_clock/

Fight Stigma & Discrimination Brochure
http://www.hiv.gov.gy/ads/stigma_sm.pdf

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