A Pathway to Peace

July 1, 2004

Accept it.

“Anger is an understandable and normal reaction,” says HIVer and NYC psychotherapist Michael Shernoff, MSW. “I don’t try to talk people out of it,” but get them to “sit with it and know that it will subside.” Only if it doesn’t, he says, can it cause harm.

Own your part.

In many cases, it may be an “externalization” of self-anger for “having participated in behavior” that put you at risk, Shernoff says. That includes folks who trusted sex partners. “It’s not PC to say, but there’s still an unconscious complicity” in not protecting yourself.

Look deeper.

“It’s easier to stay angry,” says Shernoff, than to admit that you feel “hurt, sad, vulnerable. That’s the work of professional counseling.” Seek it out one-on-one, at your local AIDS agency—or from a good friend “who can ask you difficult questions and not just give you emotional chicken soup,” says Shernoff.

Consider forgiving.

A year after he was infected, says Boston HIVer and AIDS counselor Ed Schreiber, “I saw my infector. He looked very sick. I felt anger but also compassion.” Write, but don’t send, your infector a letter—it’s cathartic. Read Fred Luskin’s Forgive for Good (HaperCollins, 2003), or visit his website, learningtoforgive.com. And remember: You don’t have to reconcile to forgive. Plus, new research suggests it’s good for your health.

—Sandra-Lee Swaby and Tim Murphy

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/A-Pathway-to-Peace-347-8376