Sexual Healing

Our erstwhile dominatrix trips down the road less traveled

January 1, 1997 By River Huston

I have been to every 12-step program ever created: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Codependents Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous. My girlfriend Ellen thinks I need to go to Floral Prints Anonymous.

My motto in life was, “If it feels good, do it till it hurts.” So what’s my point? Am I just another recovering addict with a dire need to tell the world all my shortcomings? *Nahhhhh*. I just wanted to share (oh, that 12-step lingo is ingrained) that the most healing experience I ’ve ever gone through was testing HIV positive. It has inspired a sexual-healing process that has propelled me through one revelation after another about sex and our society.

I have had some of my best sexual experiences since my HIV diagnosis. HIV freed me and made me really prioritize what I wanted out of my sex life. BHIVD (before HIV diagnosis), I would have sex for all kinds of reasons. Most of them had little to due with pleasure-at least my pleasure-or, God forbid, procreation.

My sex education has all been by experience. I slept with men to better understand them, to get what I wanted, to make them like me (*that* one works for about an hour). I had sex because I was feeling ugly, because I didn’t know how to say no, because I felt that if a man got a hard-on, it was my responsibility to relieve him of this uncomfortable state.

On a more serious note, I was raped on three occassions and seriously molested on two. After the first rape, which happened when I was 14, I couldn’t have an orgasm without fantasizing about the six men who beat me and took turns all night. I became seriously addicted to sadomasochism. Playing either role was equally exciting. The thought of loving sex with a partner whom I cared about would send me hurling for the closest toilet. I came to believe I was just evil, and that was OK.

Then came the 12-step programs. When I first went to AA, I was still employed as a dominatrix. I really loved my job, but at AA meetings I couldn’t understand everyone’s emotions, especially anger. I guess it had to do with the 100 lashes I had given to one of my lovely slaves earlier. When I got a sponsor and tried to explain the benefits I was reaping from urine therapy (peeing on bad

little boys), she didn't get it and recommended a Shrink. The Shrink told me I would never be able to find Spiritual Peace if I continued doing this kind of work. Since I believed that Spiritual Peace was the key to having a satisfying life, I retired. But then I couldn't afford the Shrink.

As a cheap alternative therapy, I searched through the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Torah, the Koran, the Tao Te Ching. I took the Course in Miracles, did affirmations-OK, I bought crystals, too.

Then I tested positive. My sexual spiritual awakening happened at a sidewalk street fair. There was a booth that was promoting getting tested for HIV. I had just tested positive and couldn't figure out why it would be unsafe for me to continue giving my boyfriend oral sex even though he was negative. I asked this stranger about the possibilities of still giving blow jobs. This woman, who looked like Margaret Mead, explained the best way to give a safe blow job. She became very animated, and right there on the Avenue of the Americas, she started pulling out dildos and condoms. I though, *This is cool!*

HIV has made us talk about sex. There has been more talk about anal intercourse in the past 10 years (it took 'em at least five to really warm up to the subject) than in all of history. With anal intercourse as the opening topic, I found it rather easy to include other sexual practices. That HIV had created a sexual revolution dawned on me as I was speaking at a Catholic university. I was simulating how to perform oral sex. There was a nun beside me signing for the deaf. I looked over as he signed how to lick just the shaft of the penis and use your hand on the head, and she was smiling.

People are in desperate need of a forum to release sexual inhibition, understand personal sexual desires and know how to eroticize safe sex. Once the doors are open, there is room for all kinds of growth. Can you imagine a society where sex can be freely discussed?

Thanksgiving. Your mom has just passed the mashed potatoes when she starts to wax poetic about her new daydream: Being a topless dancer in the Kmart. You pipe in, "I've had that fantasy!" Dad, not wanting to be left out, starts into one of his sex monologues: "I was jerking off the other day..."

You get the picture.

Silence and ignorance about sex caused HIV to spread to pandemic proportions. We are sexual beings. Let's come to terms with it.

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