Life Support

June 19, 2012 By Cristina Gonzalez

Feeling isolated? You are not alone. More than 1 million people in the United States (and 34 million total worldwide) are living with HIV, every day, day after day. A diagnosis of HIV can make you feel separated from the world, so it's important to know that beyond your network of family and friends, there are people and organizations to help you. If you feel angry, depressed, overwhelmed, rejected or afraid, reaching out to others for support is one of the best things you can do for yourself—and your health.

To determine the brand of support you want, ask yourself a few questions: Do you want structured help? What are you ready to share with others? Do you want to meet in person? Do you feel comfortable posting information about yourself online? What are you looking for: education, information or just a safe place to sit, talk or listen to others?

Next, think about contacting a local AIDS service organization. An ASO can put you in touch with local support groups where you can meet others who have gone through or are going through a similar experience. Consider joining a group formed around a shared characteristic such as your faith, sexual orientation or ethnicity.

Finally, remember the key to support is often just letting others know you need it.

POZ Support Networks

POZ Forums
Feel like talking to others online? Check out the POZ Forums: a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week online discussion area focused on HIV/AIDS. You can ask questions, get information, vent or just read what others have to say. Topics range from advice for the newly diagnosed and tips for long-term survivors to insights into dealing with mental health issues. How much, how often and when you share are completely up to you. Check it out at forums.poz.com.

POZ Directory
Connect to an AIDS service organization to find people in your area who can help you. ASOs provide a wide range of services, including case management, counseling and even on-site health clinics. Start your search at directory.poz.com. It's a comprehensive guide that's searchable by ZIP code, company name, organization type, services provided and populations served.

POZ Personals
Support doesn't have to be clinical—sometimes it can be romantic. At POZ Personals, our dating

site, you can join a community of HIV-positive people who want to share their lives with someone. It’s free, it’s private (you never have to post your picture or email address), and it’s a safe space to see, chat with and possibly meet others also living with HIV. Make a connection today at personals.poz.com.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Support-HIV-POZ-22579-6400