Finding Support

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Dealing with HIV can be a challenge, but you don't have to face it alone. In fact, creating a support network can make the difference between merely surviving with the virus and thriving with it. Not everyone has the same needs. Some folks seek info about meds and side effects; others want to chat about dating advice. Some prefer anonymity; others are loud and proud. That's OK. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to find the care and support you need. Below are five different types of support networks that you can plug into for a healthy and happy life.

Health Care Team
Doctors, nurses and health care providers make up the front line of defense when it comes to understanding the medications and lab tests associated with HIV. Another excellent source of medical know-how is your local pharmacist. And therapists can help you deal with any mental health issues. Visit the POZ Directory to find your local HIV/AIDS health care and service organizations.

Case Managers / Social Workers
Need help filling out insurance paperwork or finding a program to help pay your rent? Don't hesitate to ask these experts. They can help you wade through tedious tasks so you can focus on what's important: your health.

Family, Friends & Community
A POZ Survey found that 56 percent of respondents relied on friends as their support network, and 41 percent counted on family members. Church communities, co-workers and social groups may also offer you a way to connect with like-minded people.

Support Groups
Numerous support groups exist, for everyone from long-term HIV survivors to the newly diagnosed, and catering to groups such as alcoholics and gay men. Support groups can also vary by size. Why should you join one? The top three reasons, according to a recent POZ Survey, are 1) to be able to talk openly and honestly, 2) to feel less lonely and isolated, and 3) to seek out information.

Online Forums
If you can't or don't want to disclose your HIV status to your family and friends, or if you don't feel comfortable in a support group (or if you can't get to one), then visit the flourishing online HIV community, where you can ask questions, strike up conversations or just read other people's posts. Visit forums.poz.com to connect with others today.

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