Deconstructing DDF

November 17, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

In a previous post ("The POZ/DDF Ratio“), I promised a separate entry on ”drug and disease free“—a.k.a. ”DDF"—to explain why this phrase bothers me. Here are the main reasons.

Why are “drug” and “disease” in the same phrase? I’m a big fan of alliteration, but the repeated “D” sounds aren’t the only reason for this word coupling. Recreational drug use and sexually transmitted infections often are linked, but they are not automatically. Many people who use recreational drugs are STI-free and many people who have STIs are recreational drug-free.

Why do “drug” and “disease” refer only to recreational drugs and STIs? Alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs used for recreational purposes are at least as potentially addictive and destructive as other recreational drugs. Many communicable diseases are not sexually transmitted.

It doesn’t make sense to me to exclude people who drink alcohol regularly or smoke cigarettes and have cold sores occasionally from the DDF rules. I already hear the counter arguments. Alcohol and tobacco are not the same as heroin. Cold sores are not the same as gonorrhea or HIV. I agree?these are not equivalent, which prompts my next question.

Why request “DDF” instead of communicating what you really mean? I believe that many people who request DDF actually intend on keeping all recreational drug users and all people with STIs away from them. I also believe that DDF is used primarily by HIV-negative people to “politely” communicate that HIV-positive people are not wanted, but the DDF brush is too harsh to be polite.

A phrase like “no poz guys” isn’t polite either, but it accurately reflects what the user of that phrase really wants. I say forget being “polite” to me. My feelings are probably going to get hurt no matter how polite you are about rejecting me, so just be clear about it.

Why request “DDF” instead of practicing safer sex? Invoking the DDF spell may ward off most poz guys, but it is not an impenetrable force field. At best, someone may simply be unaware that they are HIV-positive. At worst, someone may intentionally lie about being HIV-positive. You’re within your rights to request DDF, but don’t delude yourself into thinking it’s a proper substitute for safer sex.

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