Loving Self

August 29, 2013 By Aundaray Guess

In a previous blog I touched on the subject of self-hate that many gays show to each other and how that is reflected in the way we interact. I want to continue this discussion as it's an important topic that needs to be talked about. What I presented in the previous blog was more of awareness and this time I would like to try to answer the question I posed in how we love ourselves as same gender loving men living with HIV.

Self-hate is one of the most destructive traits to have as it hinders your ability to form and even maintain relationships with others. For some it may manifest itself as displaying the way you feel about yourself externally to strangers and people you know. It's a sad matter when another gay person I encounter within the first few seconds of coming into view of me, greets me with a look of disdain or scorn when they don't even know my person. Some call it giving 'shade' but remove the fancy naming of it and the reality is that it's a showing of how that person feels about themselves.

Most self-hating behaviors come from encountering opposing views of our sexuality. The process of not having the ability to simply' be' based on homophobia leaves many in a repressed state where they have to contain their true selves. Adding HIV to the mix, you know feel further distanced from your own gay community as it's recognized that within that community lies stigma and rejection based on your status. Living in an environment where it feels no one accepts you, we sometimes place the blame on ourselves and wish things and ourselves were different.

Self-hating behaviors also can lead to risky behaviors such as unsafe sex and heavy usage of drugs and alcohol and is one off the contributors to depression. You reach that place of not caring and embrace negative traits as a way to simply forget or not deal with the situation that you're in.

So how do you navigate around this hostility and looking at ourselves how do we fix a part of us that we don't particularly like? In addition as gay individuals living with HIV, how do we remove that negativity out of our lives and find the way to love ourselves even when we don't feel others do. Answering the question I looked at five ways to move to a place of self-love.

1. Stop Auditioning

   We all have something to contribute and give to the world. But living in the judgment of others we stop finding out who we are and what we like. We become passive in our interactions and our wants and desires are not acknowledged. I know this personally as I once lived a life feeling I had to please others to like me and accept me. Based on a previous history of child abuse

and now having HIV I was looking for the love of others and didn't realize I wasn't giving it to myself. It felt as when I met someone I was doing a tap dance, putting on a show for that person to like me. I was auditioning for their attention and affection. Stop auditioning and seeking the approval of others. Recognize that true love is someone who accepts you fully for who you are and don't require you to audition for their love. A person who truly cares for you will not only look out for their wants but will also make sure yours are being met. Acceptance is a two way street and should never be one way. If it is step off the stage and give your own self a bow for knowing you don't have to seek the approval of others, whether it's someone you know or strangers.

2. Start Seeing the Love Around You

Often I hear people state that there are no good men or women and how one is overlooked while others get attention. In their quest for love or building friendships the search becomes frustrating and the behavior of one is now used to judge others. So instead of one person being shallow you start to see everyone as shallow. Unfortunately by using such a broad brush we miss out on good people who are giving you attention. We have focused so much on those who won't give us the time of the day and have developed blinders to those who are trying to garner our attention. We focus on those who won't love us because of one's HIV status and don't recognize that for that one who rejects you, they are simply making room for those who will accept you. We can push away good people by not seeing the love that is around us. That person may not have all the physical attributes we like or may not fit that perfect mold, but unless you're giving perfection you can't expect it. We all have flaws and recognizing that we start giving more attention to those who truly want to get to know us as opposed to those who won't give you the time of the day

3. Stop the Negative Talk

Ask yourself would people want to be around you if they were able to hear the dialogue that happens in your conscious. Better yet would you want to be around yourself if you heard so much negativity on a daily basis? We can be our own worst enemy when it comes to negative thinking. We beat ourselves with so much negative talk that we start to believe it. Then we wonder why people don't want to be around you. Negativity thoughts block you from reaching your full potential and are a classic example of self-hating behavior. Having HIV doesn't make you ugly; our negative thinking makes us ugly. HIV is what you have it's not who you are. In a nut shell if you don't think highly of yourself why would anyone else. The loving process begins with you and you'd be surprised how people will flock toward you based on sensing the love you're showing yourself. It's also a good way to prevent engagement in negative behaviors as you've switched your internal dialogue from 'no one loves me' to 'I love myself"

4. It's Not About You

Sometimes we want to personalize our interactions and become bitter when someone doesn't seem interested in us. Sometimes we think it's something we did, the way we look or our HIV status. We even sometimes g o into a long elaborate story of the person's motive for non-engagement. When you think about it that's a lot of energy. And you'll realize its misplaced energy when you accept that it's not about you. It sounds so simple because it is. Sometimes a person may not accept your attention or advancement because they may not be in a place to. One has no idea what stressors that person is going through let alone their history. We want to take their lack of response as a negative and turn it back on ourselves where now we have anger for not only that person but the whole gender. It's unfair to them and it's unfair to you. Recognizing it's not about you will lessen the edge and you'll learn how to have empathy. In the same breath it's not an invite to try to fix that person. It's only not your job but you're simply setting yourself up for failure and more bitterness. Just move on to someone who's ready to have that engagement.

5. Practice Saying I Love Me

This last practice of removing self-hate will sound revolutionary when I present it. A best practice of confronting self-hating aspects of you is to look in the mirror each morning and to tell yourself that you love you. It may sound vain but why is loving yourself such a bad thing? It can be a daily practice to look in the mirror and not look for the negative or what's out of place, but to look for all the positive things about you. Look and embrace you no matter what part of your body you're looking at. It can be out of shape or the wrong color no matter it's a part of you and that makes it and you unique. Focus on all the great characteristics that makes you and embrace it. Most importantly when you tell yourself how much you love what you're seeing also go beyond the external and give yourself acknowledgement for enduring the hardships in your life and still rising to meet other challenges. Take credit for the fact that despite your circumstances you have still rise and our beauty is more than your reflection.

But most importantly love you and if no one in the world loves you (which I doubt) you can take comfort in the fact there's one person that loves you unconditionally; and that's you.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.