

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

# Self Esteem, HIV and Safer Sex

THIS IS SO  
EMBARRASSING  
TO TALK  
ABOUT.

I'll JUST  
GET DUMPED...

"PLANNING"  
IS SO CORNY.

WHAT  
COULD  
HAPPEN?

PROTECT YOURSELF

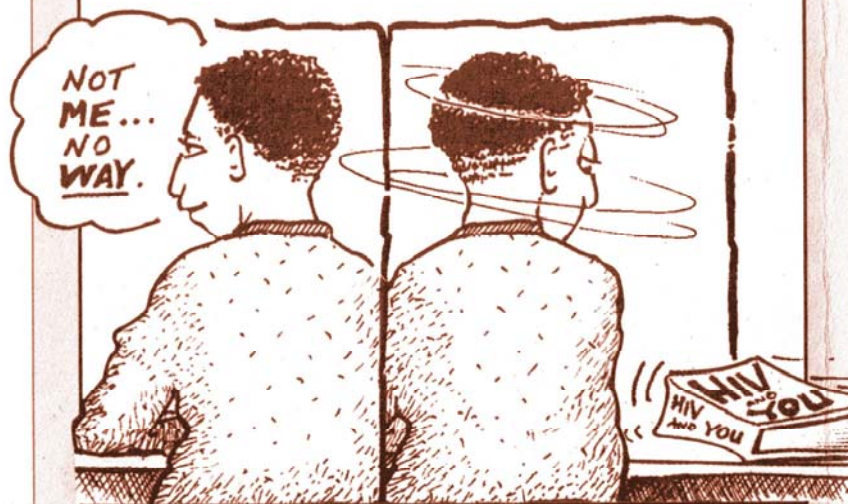
## WHAT'S SELF ESTEEM GOT TO DO WITH SEX?

Self esteem is how we feel about ourselves. It affects how we act and the kinds of decisions we make – including the decisions we make about safer sex.

### Good self esteem means caring about your risk!

Do you think you are not at risk for HIV? Do you believe, “It will never happen to me?”

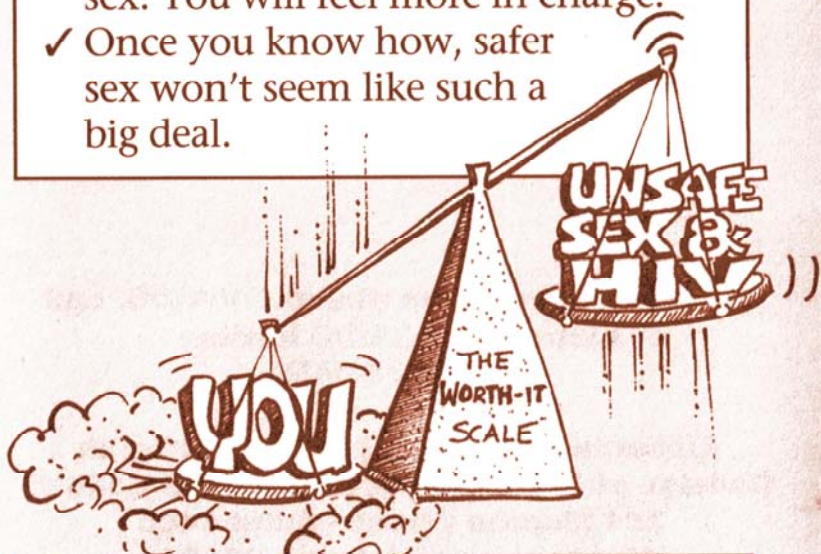
- ✓ Everyone who is sexually active faces some risk of HIV.
- ✓ Taking good care of yourself means finding out what you need to do to stay safer – and then taking action.
- ✓ If you are not sure how to stay safer, talk with an HIV educator, your health care provider or a counselor.



## You are worth the effort!

Does safer sex seem like too much trouble? Do you feel like you're not worth the extra effort?

- ✓ Everyone deserves to be safe. And, safer sex may be easier than you think.
- ✓ Learn to use condoms and latex barriers. Practice before you have sex. You will feel more in charge.
- ✓ Once you know how, safer sex won't seem like such a big deal.



## Are you afraid of rejection?

Worrying about your partner's reaction is normal. But not being safe because you are afraid of rejection is just too risky.

- ✓ Think about how you will bring up the subject. Plan what to say.
- ✓ If your partner is upset or gets mad, give him/her time to cool off – but insist on safer sex.
- ✓ It's better to face rejection than to become infected with HIV.

## You can plan today for safer sex!

Does it seem wrong to think about and plan for sex? Do you think it is only OK to have sex if it “just happens?”

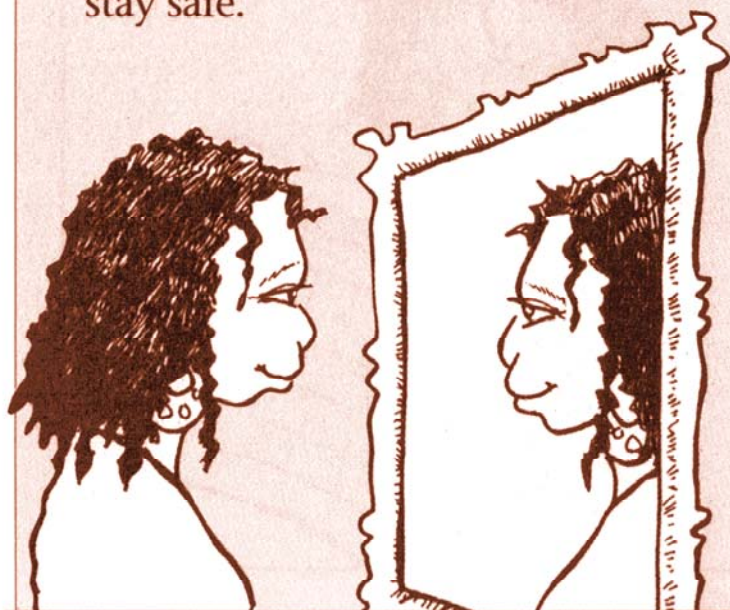
- ✓ Thinking about, talking about, and planning for sex may be uncomfortable. But planning is an important part of safer sex.
- ✓ Planning ahead means making sure you are ready emotionally. Know your limits.
- ✓ If there is any chance you will have sex, have condoms, latex barriers and water-based lubricant on hand.
- ✓ Remember, you don't have to plan when the mood will strike, you just need to be prepared if it does.



## Building self esteem starts with action!

Follow these steps and stay safer:

1. Only have sex when you are prepared to be safe.
2. Know your limits and stick to them – you'll feel better about yourself.
3. Improve your safer sex confidence. Learn to use latex condoms. Show your partner.
4. Stay in charge. Use condoms every time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex. Use a latex barrier (a condom cut in half or a dental dam) for oral sex with a woman.
5. Respect your body. Never share needles for injecting drugs or steroids. Never share needles or inks for tattoos or body piercing.
6. Avoid situations when you may have trouble following safer sex guidelines. Remember, alcohol and drugs may make it harder to stay safe.



## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

You've probably heard about HIV and safer sex. You may even know how to protect yourself from HIV. But do you always act in your best interests? Are you practicing safer sex when you need to? This pamphlet will help you explore self esteem and sex—and help you take steps to stay safer.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

**For more information about HIV/AIDS, call  
Alabama HIV/AIDS Hotline  
1-800-228-0469**

**Alabama Department of Public Health  
Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control  
201 Monroe Street - Suite 1400  
Montgomery, Alabama 36104**

ADPH-HIV/AIDS - 139  
07/01

This pamphlet is not a substitute for professional medical care.  
If you have questions or concerns, please talk with a  
health care provider.

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