

Birchgrove

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to tell....

In this issue of the Birchgrove newsletter we aim to explore peoples experiences around disclosure. Should you tell people about your HIV, your Hepatitis C, or even your Haemophilia/Bleeding disorder? What are your experiences of telling people about your health status? What are your experiences of not telling people about any of them? How do people react when you tell them about your HIV? Are there any tips for Birchgrove readers about telling friends and family? What happens after you have told certain people? Has this changed your relationship for the better or worse? Is there a right time to tell and if so when? How do you do it and how does it make you feel? Do you feel that certain people should know? What do they do when they are told and how do they handle that information? How do you tell partners or children? Does your status affect your employment and do you tell employers or fellow colleagues?

Obviously we can't answer all your questions and everyone approaches this issue differently but hopefully some of the articles will give some food for thought.

stopping the secrets...

My husband is an HIV+ HCV+ haemophiliac. He was diagnosed with HIV at the age of 11. We met at University in 1998, and on our third date he told me he was HIV and HCV+. I was very upset, partly as I already knew that this was the person I wanted to spend my life with and it was very upsetting to believe that would be cut short so early in our relationship. At the time he asked me not to tell anyone else, as he was not sure about how other friends would manage.

Shortly after our wedding in 2001 it seemed more appropriate to stop keeping his medical status a secret, particularly from my family and our closest friends. My family reacted extremely well, my mother wasn't surprised or upset even though we had both been lying about it for 3 years. She has been extremely supportive since. We are still close friends with those who have been told - *the most difficult part of telling them is trying to explain that neither of us are about to die and that it is best just to get on with life and enjoy what there is.*

HIV is more difficult to disclose than HCV simply because of the stigma. In particular as my husband became HIV+ through a blood transfusion there seems to be a certain degree of people taking the disclosure well because it is "good AIDS." However, we have generally had the experience that we are underestimating our friends by the way we have expected them to react, and everybody has coped very well.

The author of this article asked to remain anonymous.

...Or not to tell

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