

LGBT

# 4 OUR HEALTH

A LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER HEALTH NEWSLETTER

## MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITY

By Doug Cloud

Mental health continues to have a stigma of weakness in American society. Add to that the stigma of being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and the issue becomes even more urgent. Depression and suicide rates among LGBT youth are difficult to measure, but some estimates claim that nearly a third of youth suicides are LGBT related.

Being lesbian or gay used to be considered a mental illness and treatment centered on "conversion therapy" or similar methods. The American Psychological Association has denounced such treatment and many psychologists agree that it can cause severe damage to those who undergo it. However, the realization that LGBT issues do not cause mental illness is only the starting point.

LGB people share the same obstacles to mental health as the rest of the population. They struggle with aging, relationships,

and disease in much the same way as the rest of society. Diseases like depression and anxiety appear in every part of society but homophobia and societal pressures create a more intense environment of dysfunction for the LGBT reputation. There are of course other issues that are unique to the LGBT population. Processes like coming out and gender transition can make things even more difficult.

Many people are concerned at the implications of admitting that there is a higher incidence of mental illness in the LGBT community. There is a notion that having higher rates of mental illness would somehow make us unhealthy people. The study of statistics, however, will tell you that correlation does not necessarily indicate causation. There is no evidence to suggest that being LGBT is in any way related to mental illness. It is far more likely that such a

connection would be caused by homophobia and societal pressures.

If our community is to continue to move forward in our fight for equality, we must face the mental health issue with full knowledge and humility. Most of the mental health community stands behind LGBT people in their quest to lead authentic, happy, and free lives. We have the tools, but we still need the courage to use them.

Psychologists and Psychiatrists do business everywhere across the country. If you are lucky enough to attend Ohio University, you have access to free sessions with highly qualified mental health professionals. You can even ask for someone who specializes in LGBT issues in your area. Getting help does not make you weak, it makes you stronger. Counseling and Psychological Services are located on the third floor of the Hudson Health Center and can be reached at 593-1616.

### ALSO, IN THIS ISSUE

- STI EXPOSE: 2**
- HPV AND HERPES**
- DEPRESSED 3**
- FRIENDS**
- KICKING THE SMOKING HABBIT 3**

## HEALTHY COMMUNICATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

By Nicole Long

In the movies, it seems that couples always know exactly what each other needs. In reality, such an ideal doesn't exist. No one is psychic and expecting someone to be is simply over-demanding and unrealistic. Understanding this fact is the beginning of building healthy communication in relationships.

However, there is a difference between healthy communication and being confrontational. There is more than one way to attract someone's

attention, and becoming angry and flustered hardly ever produces a positive response. Rather than accusing your partner of moving your books from where you intentionally left them, why not calmly ask, "Have you seen my books?" By consciously changing the way you communicate your desires, you can receive much better results.

Not all communication, though, is done verbally. Non-verbal communication, such as facial expression and

**Continued on page 2, Relationships**



## STI EXPOSE: HUMAN PAPILOMA VIRUS AND HERPES

By Laura Mack

**Editor's Note:** STI EXPOSE will appear in following issues covering different STI's each time.

### HPV

"If you look around a room of women, chances are that most of them have had HPV one times in their lives," said Center for Disease Control (CDC) epidemiologist, Karen White. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the most common Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) in America; however, most people are not aware it and many have never even heard of it. HPV is serious, though, and people need to not only be aware of its existence but also know how they can protect themselves.

HPV is a skin virus which causes abnormal cells or warts to form on the cervix, vagina, labia and anus for women and on the tip of the penis and anus for men. These abnormal cells can lead to the formation of cancerous cells. Though there are over 100 types of known HPV viruses only four are identified as causing cancer. In most cases where a person has HPV, the individual is unaware of their infection. Often times there are no visible symptoms. That is why it is very important for women to have yearly gynecological exams and for men to undergo yearly physical exams. Through exams, these abnormal cells can be identified early and undergo treatment before cancer develops.

However, there is no cure to HPV, only treatment. Often times HPV will go away on its own through treatment but not always. Currently, a vaccine for the most dangerous types of HPV is in its final phase of testing and is expected to receive FDA approval within a couple of years. Until then, the only sure way to protect oneself from HPV is

**"If you look around a room of women, chances are that most of them have had HPV once in their lives."**

**-CDC Epidemiologist**

through abstinence, but you can greatly reduce your chances of getting it by being in a monogamous relationship or by practicing safe sex by using a condom. If you are seeking more information of HPV, check out:

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/sti/>

### Herpes

Another sexually transmitted disease, which has no cure, is herpes. There are two types of the herpes virus, herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV1) and herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV2). Both of these types of herpes cause sores to appear in and around the mouth, lips, vaginal area, on the penis, around the anal opening, and on the buttocks or thighs. Sores can also appear on other parts of the body where the virus has entered through broken skin.

HSV1 typically is the virus that infects the mouth and causes cold sores or fever blisters whereas HSV2 primarily affects the genital area however this is not the rule. Once a person gets herpes, the virus remains in the body within nerve cells and can periodically cause outbreaks, especially when the person is run down, stressed out or sick.

Herpes is sexually transmitted when the infected person is having an outbreak of herpes, meaning experiencing symptoms. Transmission can occur through kissing, oral sex, and through penetration. Once a person contracts the disease, they may not experience symptoms for quite a while; but if they do, symptoms include itchy/burning sensation, abdominal pain, discharge, and after a few days of these symptoms, sores begin to appear on the infected area. During a person's first episode, they might also experience headaches, fever, and achy muscles. If a person takes care of themselves by exercising, eating healthy and getting plenty of rest, they can greatly decrease the amount of outbreaks they can experience within their life. If you seek more information on herpes, a good website to check out is <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheet/stdherp.htm> or <http://www.herpes.org/>

## RELATIONSHIPS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

body language, can say more than a few words. For example, if you ask your partner, "How are you?" and she/he responds, "Fine!" with a pained look, then it is obvious that she/he doesn't really mean it. If a person's body language doesn't match what she/he is saying, then it never hurts to ask if something is wrong.

One should also strive to become a more active listener rather than zoning out or only thinking of a

way to retort when there is a break in the conversation. Being an active listener requires a person to focus on what is being said and to restate it to the person speaking to show that you understand. Eye contact and listening body language also helps show your partner that you really care about what she/he has to say. Being able to effectively communicate can make a huge difference in keeping a relationship more stable.



## IS MY FRIEND DEPRESSED?

By Megan Snow

One of the most important parts of our health is our emotional wellbeing and is the aspect most often overlooked or disregarded. However, ignoring this aspect of ourselves often has harsh consequences. As life becomes more and more stressful, it is easy to fall into depression. Often we worry about our friends, but how can we tell if someone is depressed?

Here are some signs to watch out for are:

- ✦ Talking about feeling hopeless, pessimistic, guilty, helpless or worthless
- ✦ Having trouble making decisions, concentrating, or remembering
- ✦ Losing interest or pleasure in ordinary activities

- ✦ Withdrawing from friends
- ✦ Excessively skipping class
- ✦ Loss of appetite, weight loss or gain
- ✦ Restlessness or irritability
- ✦ Heavy drinking or drug use
- ✦ Talking about death or suicide

If someone you know has one or more of these symptoms you should encourage them to visit the Counseling and Psychological Services on the 3rd floor of Hudson, and contact Ohio University's Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance at [dbsa@ohio.edu](mailto:dbsa@ohio.edu).



“Often we worry about our friends, but how can we tell if someone is depressed?”

## KICKING THE SMOKING HABIT

By Megan Snow

We all know that smoking is bad for our health, so I am not going to preach at you today about the evils of tobacco. Instead, I would like to provide some practical advice, smoker-to-smoker, to those who have decided to quit.

### Step-Down Method

The step-down method entails taking into account how many cigarettes you smoke in one day. Once this is determined you then gradually reduce this number, usually on a daily basis, until the day comes when and you are down to one, and then none.

### Cold Turkey Method

For some this method seems harsh, for it involves stopping at that moment and never smoking again. Others, however, find it the best method for themselves; really, it all depends on the person.

### Assistance Method

The assistance method is using an assistance product to help quit, such as nicotine patches or gum. This method is more expensive, but compared to the amount of money spent on the cigarettes over the years, it seems like a fair investment.

### A few tips for any method:

1. *Choose a good time.* Trying to quit during exam week or right after a break up probably won't be successful. Try to choose a time when your level of stress is not overly high.
2. *Avoid trigger places.* In general, try not to put yourself into situations where you will want to smoke. Sit in the non-smoking section of the restaurant, and stay inside during the break at the Open Doors meeting.
3. *Cut yourself some slack.* If you do break down and fall to temptation, don't beat yourself up about it, and don't use it as an excuse to run down to the Campus Sundry to buy a new pack. Everyone trips now and again; the important thing is to get back up.
4. *Build a support network.* All those friends, who have been nagging you since you light up your first Marlboro can now help provide support to you, and most especially those who have been through this process before. Don't be afraid to ask for help!
5. *Treat yourself.* Remind yourself of all the positives of quitting, especially when the cravings are hitting. Buy a new CD. Go for a long walk. Revel in your extra cashing and improving health.

Visit us on the web at  
<http://www.ohiou.edu/lgbt>



**OHIO**  
UNIVERSITY

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender  
Programs Center  
314 Baker University Center  
Phone: 740.593-0239  
Email: [lgbt@ohio.edu](mailto:lgbt@ohio.edu)

## **4 OUR Health**

**Editor:** Laura Mack

**Asst. Editor:** Amanda Thompson

**Publisher:** Mickey Hart

**Fall 2004**

### **MISSION**

*The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Programs Center, as an integral part of the university community and the Division of Student Affairs advances the mission of Ohio University by serving people of all sexual orientations and gender identities as individuals and as groups. We are committed to fostering human development and cultivating an inclusive, open, and supportive community through education, support,*

**4 O U R H E A L T H ~ 4 Y O U R L I F E T I M E**

## **HUDSON HEALTH CENTER**

Student Health Services 593-4730

Counseling & Psychological Services 593-1616

Health Education & Wellness 593-4742

## **THANKS FOR PICKING US UP, NOW KEEP IN TOUCH!**

We hope you like this issue of **4 OUR Health!** Please write us and let us know what you think and what you want to see more or less of. Remember this resource is here to provide for your needs and concerns while adhering to the mission of the LGBT Center and the most current information available to us. We want to make sure that you are given the best information and facts so that you can make informed and sound decisions concerning your life and your health.

If we are not providing what you need, we want to know about it. And if we are providing what you need, we want to know about it. Any way it goes, we would really appreciate your input and ideas. We can be reached by telephone at (740)-593-0239 or by email at [lgbt@ohio.edu](mailto:lgbt@ohio.edu).