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## Living confidently with HIV: A Self-Help Book for People Living with HIV

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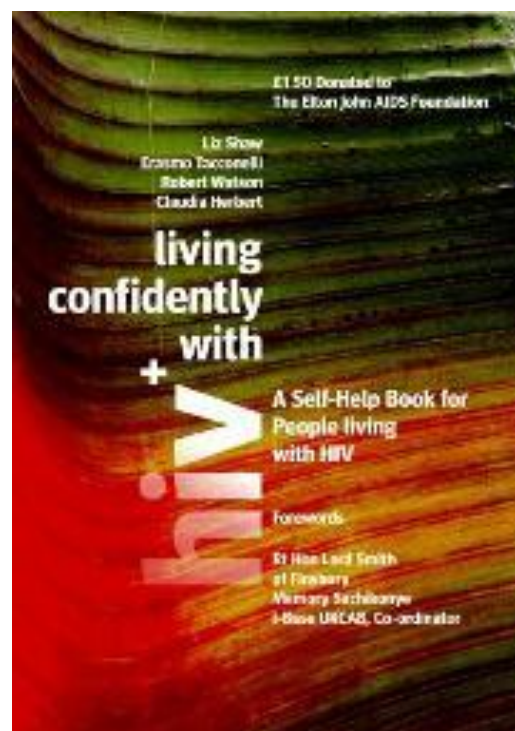
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*Living confidently with HIV: A Self-Help Book for People Living with HIV* has been written by a team of clinical psychologists who have extensive experience in working with patients who have been diagnosed with and are coming to terms with their diagnosis of being HIV positive. Consultant Clinical psychologist Liz Shaw focuses on improving the lives of people with HIV and provides them with positive ways of coping and this certainly resonates throughout the entire book. Erasmo Tacconelli, a Chartered Clinical Psychologist, ensures that his patients feel empowered in coping with stigma and discrimination; this too is resonated throughout the book. Robert Watson is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist whose clinical techniques stem from cognitive behavioural therapy, systemic therapy and cognitive-analytic therapy. His focus is very similar to that of Erasmo but also ensures those who are affected have a good quality of life. Finally, Dr Claudia Herbert, a Chartered Consultant Clinical Psychologist, specialises in trauma psychology. Claudia Herbert ensures that she can help people adjust to their HIV diagnosis and live their lives well, confidently and enriched despite or possibly because of their chronic condition.

The format of the book is very easy to read and follow. It begins with a brief introduction to the book followed by the aims of the book which are clear, concise and met throughout. It then follows with a section titled How to use this book, primarily about self-help, the advantages and disadvantages of self-help, and what different approaches are presented further. The book is then split into three parts:

Part A: entitled Living Confidently with HIV is made up of 6 chapters.

*Chapter 1: Being Diagnosed HIV Positive* aims to explain the health improvements in HIV as a result of the new drug treatments and how they impact on people; the ideas that have been put forward aim to provide a basis upon which the rest of this book will refer to. The key point in this chapter is that the more you understand your condition the more in control you will feel in your life.

*Chapter 2: Health, Stress and Lifestyles* focuses on the lifestyle that is adopted having been diagnosed and how important this is to living with HIV. The chapter goes on to explain how we as individuals understand stress and the user is provided with ideas on how to manage stress when it arises and how it can affect his/her quality of life.

*Chapter 3: Negotiating HIV Treatment, Healthcare & Social Care* attempts to help the reader think about their network and how best to use it for the benefit of the personal health. It focuses on the individual's relationship with important members of the network.

*Chapter 4: HIV Disclosure and Challenging Stigma* offers an overview of some key issues in relation to helping the individual to accept his/her diagnosis and some directions to help the individual think about disclosure, as it can be a challenge to manage the task of disclosure to people outside the care network, especially loved ones, family and friends.

*Chapter 5: Sexual relationships and HIV* provides information to help HIV positive people in their sexual lives. It is written for both sexes and different cultures and should be useful regardless of the type of sexual relationship the individual engages in. It outlines ways HIV can affect sexual functioning and relationships and discusses issues related to safer sex.

*Chapter 6: Child and Family HIV*; HIV can affect anyone and over the past ten years there has been an increase in the numbers of HIV infected children. As people are living longer on medication, it is not just adults who are HIV positive, but also babies, children and adolescents. This chapter offers an overview of the key issues in relation to pregnancy, children and family life for people negotiating life with HIV.

Part B: Emotion-Focused Strategies is split into 3 chapters.

*Chapter 7: Understanding HIV-Associated Emotions*. This chapter explains the nature of emotions and outlines the importance and usefulness of emotions; it also explains common emotions associated with HIV infection.

*Chapter 8: When Emotions are Difficult* highlights some of the times when HIV can become quite difficult to deal with. This chapter focuses on areas of emotional invalidation, secondary emotions, recreational drugs, self-harm and suicide. The work of American psychiatrist Marsha Linehan is acknowledged.

*Chapter 9: Mindfulness and HIV* – covers the skill of mindfulness. This skill can help with difficult emotions in its own right. Mindfulness is a novel approach to emotional acceptance. Its origin can be traced back to as early as the first millennium B.C., to Buddha. It is now being widely used by psychologists.

*Part C: Problem-Focused Strategies* is split into 3 chapters.

*Chapter 10: Anxiety and Depression Strategies* focuses on anxiety and depression, as they are the most common psychological problems in the general population. Although the authors touch upon this in chapter 2, it is important to stress that these factors are especially common for people with HIV and because and as such require extra attention and care. The chapter helps to recognise these states and provides helpful strategies for dealing with them.

*Chapter 11: Problem Solving and HIV* introduces the reader to problem-solving as a strategy. It explains how this concept can be integrated into everyday tasks to help overcome everyday stressors and obstacles. It highlights the importance of having good problem solving techniques to be able to cope with life's ups and downs.

*Chapter 12: Visualising the Future* helps the reader come to terms with their prognosis or chances of living well with HIV infection, since these are better than they have ever been. The importance of ensuring a good quality of life is also stressed.

This book is a fantastic self-help guide to take the individual through their journey of living confidently with HIV positive, from the initial diagnosis, through to prognosis.

*Living confidently with HIV: A Self-Help Book for People Living with HIV* is a book which can be used not only as a self-help guide for those who are living with the diagnosis of being HIV positive but also by those who care for such individuals. It is a guide that can be used as a reference tool with its rich advice and no-nonsense approach. It is easy to read and follow and it is very informative. The authors have done a thorough job in ensuring that all the information contained in the book is up-to-date and relevant too.