

## WHAT IS PLUS?

PLUS (Positive Living for US) is a week-end workshop for those of us who have tested or may test HIV positive. Our goal is to provide up-to-date information and emotional support covering all aspects of the individual - physical, emotional and spiritual. Empowering ourselves through knowledge, to meet the challenges of being HIV positive. Acknowledging that all information about HIV in all areas cannot be covered in one week-end, PLUS offers introductory information through presentations, extensive printed materials, and guides to available resources in our community.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND PLUS?

- Individuals who have recently tested HIV positive.
- Significant others of those HIV positive individuals.
- People who may have been positive for quite some time, but have not yet received information on HIV.
- PLUS is also for those who have not yet taken the HIV antibody test, but wish to get information and support before they do so.
- Other HIV service providers.

## WHAT WILL YOU LEARN AT PLUS?

Early intervention is the most important key to healthy living with HIV. PLUS provides accurate and up-to-date presentations and materials, empowering participants to self-manage their program of care. Following completion of the 25 hours of the PLUS week-end, participants are able to make informed choices about different treatment options, and meet the daily psychosocial challenges of HIV. PLUS includes not just presentations on Medical basics and treatment options, but also covers topics on nutrition, alternative therapies, safer sex, insurance and public benefits, stress management, coping with emotions, accessing health care systems, techniques for emotional well-being and experiential exercises facilitating the expression of all feelings.

## WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?

PLUS will be presented quarterly at the beginning of 1994 by the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention in San Francisco.

## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

There is NO charge to attend PLUS.

## HOW DO I REGISTER?

Simply call (415) 403-3800 and ask for a PLUS Participant Registration packet. Registration will be limited to 75 participants per seminar and is expected to be full.

## CAN I VOLUNTEER FOR PLUS?

Yes! PLUS Volunteers are among the very best of human kind and the most important body, next to the participants, because their love and commitment is what makes the magic happen. There are two teams of volunteers; Tech-Team (registration, set-up, food preparation, slides, sound equipment, etc.), and Support Group Facilitator Team (any volunteer serving as a support group facilitator will be trained in the skilled art of non-judgmental active listening and peer counseling.

## Comments about the PLUS (Positive Living for US) Seminar

(Quotes taken from PLUS Participant evaluations)

"... PLUS has changed my life. Not only did I acquire invaluable information about living with HIV, but I was able to release so many emotions which had been suppressed all this time. The love and support I was able to give and receive was absolutely incredible."

"Since my HIV+ result, I have never felt so positive and so full of hope for the future... thank you very much."

"The PLUS week-end is still vivid in the thoughts and what I learned is already being put to use. I am very grateful for the opportunity to partake in the fun and awareness. The emotional impact of that large group... laughing, crying, learning new skills to live better and longer, touching and sharing their secret fears and dreams with the rest of us... was awesome."

"I found the experience to be positive, uplifting, educational and important. Everyone involved did a wonderful job."

"I was challenged, provoked and sensitized - even as I write, my emotions swell realizing that I received valuable information, plus unconditional caring and support."

"The overall feeling of the seminar was summed up best in the closing moments when one of the participants remarked that he had initially attended the seminar to find out how to die, but was living with the conviction of learning how to live. The seminar does much more than give hope and support to those living with HIV."

"I don't see how people can go through this illness without PLUS, it is almost a prerequisite. Here it is a month after the seminar and I'm still raving about it to everyone ...like you told us, I took the weekend home inside of me and it's still there."

"The seminar was time well-worth spending, the closeness of everyone and support was invaluable."

"I finally can see the bigger picture - the entire seminar was excellent!"

"I have been sitting here for the longest time trying to find the words to put on paper which can amply describe the tremendous amount of gratitude and appreciation I have been feeling towards the PLUS seminar since last weekend. I can tell you that I received so much from the seminar, more than I ever expected."

"What a presentation and mix of information, people, love and hope. I'm so glad I was part of the weekend."

## UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF THE PLUS SEMINAR

The purpose of the "Positive Living for US" week-end seminar is to provide information on the HIV virus as well as emotional support to the following individuals:

- Individuals who have recently tested HIV positive;
  - significant others of those HIV+ individuals,
  - those people who may have been positive for quite some time, but have not yet received information on HIV.
  - PLUS is also for those who have not yet taken the HIV antibody test, but wish to get information and support before they do so.
- a)** The PLUS Seminar is designed to provide information covering all aspects of the individual - physical, emotional and spiritual. Our Early Intervention Education Model includes not just presentation on Medical basics and drug treatment options, but also covers topics on nutrition, complementary therapies, safer sex practices, insurance and public benefits basics, accessing health care systems, techniques for emotional well-being and experiential exercises facilitating the expression of all feelings.
- b)** PLUS does not endorse any philosophy, treatment modality, or universal answer to the challenges of HIV. It is the belief of this program that each of us, once given the exposure and/or information needed, can decide what is most appropriate for our own individual well-being. The steps taken by one individual may well be different than the steps taken by another; it is the necessary right for each individual to make her or his own decisions regarding self-care management. Therefore this seminar operates under the premise that knowledge and support equal self empowerment.
- c)** We feel it is essential that persons of all cultures, racial backgrounds, sexual orientations, genders and educational backgrounds be treated equally and in the same way - as important and valuable human beings deserving respect. Discrimination is not tolerated at the PLUS Seminar.
- d)** Access to disabled population is a priority at the PLUS week-end.

- e)* The PLUS seminar has a responsibility to provide both, childcare and transportation services whenever possible, to accommodate those who might otherwise not be able to attend.
- f)* Of primary importance to this Program is the principle of Confidentiality. Staff, volunteers, speakers and participants alike may not disclose the HIV status of any other individual. Records are kept with this principle in mind, as are the trainings involved for all volunteers. Participants are encouraged that, "Who you see here and what you hear here, let it stay here".
- g)* Emotional support groups are essential component of the seminar. Any volunteer serving as a support group facilitator must be trained in the skilled art of non-judgemental, active listening.
- h)* Feelings are encouraged in expression; advice from others is not. Facilitators and other group members may, however, share their own experiences when the feelings and/or situations have been similar.
- i)* So that PLUS may be accessed by all, it is necessary that this seminar be presented free of charge.
- j)* It is of the upmost importance that every effort be made so that each participant, as he or she takes the first courageous steps by attending the seminar, feel as welcomed as possible. This is accomplished mainly through the attitudes of the PLUS volunteers.  
Other techniques for comfortability include;
- Similar ethnic, racial, age, gender, sexual orientation make-up for both participants and volunteers.
  - site availability, space set up, food preparation and so on.
- k)* The Positive Living for US seminar serves only as an introduction to HIV care and management. The seeking of other services and the creation of a support network after attending PLUS is encouraged. We look at PLUS not as an end in itself, but a beginning to self-care.