

# Like a letter in a bottle:

*"I would like to meet some new friends male or female who I can trust and talk to... shall I put an ad in the newsletter?" "I had an invitation to a gathering but felt it was too big a step to take, I wish I had the confidence to do it ..."* This lady's ad tells of all the activities and interests she has – a busy life with lots of friends. So I deduce that her ad is actually saying *"I want to be able to talk about herpes simplex to other people who have it."* My advice to her is that she has:



## 4 ways to talk to and meet people about herpes simplex

### Entirely within your control, you can:

1. Talk to a helpline, they are all people who have felt the anguish that "Now I am different no one will want me." But they have proved that to be wrong and all are now living successfully with this virus. Female helpline said: "I've had many partners since, now married and have a child ... as far as I know, none of them caught it." "Male helpline: I've got married and had two children. And no, my wife doesn't have it."
2. Go to events: Saturday afternoon chats, mid-week evenings (this is often one-to-one with Marian), occasional events organised outside London, workshops, the AGM seminars... If you don't want to talk about 'cold sores' but would like to socialise with people with 'cold sores', then there are the H-date events organised by 'Profesize' about every 3 months – see article page 12. If I have your email address, I will forward the invitations to you. Details are on at his website <http://216.92.34.170/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=797>.
3. Set up a meeting in your area. See next article for how easy this is. If it is a success and lots of people come – that is great. If it is a damp squib and no one turns up except the helpline or staff member who agreed to be there for the

first event, well then, you have a nice one-to-one counselling session/conversation with the helpline/office member. And remember, helpline and office counsellors are, by definition, good listeners and interesting on 'this topic'.

### Or, totally outside your control, you can:



4. Put a message in a bottle and send it out in the hope that someone will decide to respond... I mean: you can put an ad in *SPHERE*. You could be lucky – I do get letters from people saying "take out my ad, I've now met someone through it".

But I'm afraid that despite our saying **members should respond to any letters you are sent** we constantly get complaints that some people are not doing so!

So, BE BRAVE, I beg you, talk to helpline and/or come along to events. We are all very normal, we do not bite, we will not make you stand up and "tell your story" (like AA does). Don't moulder away 'like a leper' – come and rejoin the human race!

Marian Nicholson

## My most memorable new facts – from a new helpline

Herpes simplex is just a cold sore lower down. There is no need for doctors to use the medical term. Do they say "chickenpox" or "herpes varicella"? Wouldn't it be wonderful and helpful if when they diagnosed us and they would say:

"It's a cold sore you have there. No treatment is necessary as it'll go away by itself. However if you have a bad case, there's a course of antiviral tablets to help it clear up."

If asked how it is caught, they could say:

"By direct skin contact with the affected part, so don't let anyone else touch it – apart from the person you got it from or another person who already has it."

That is what people with cold sores are told. Nothing about "always kiss through a sheet of cling film as there's a tiny risk you can pass it on when you don't have a cold sore" – when it is a fact that facial sores are even more likely to be passed on when no symptoms are present.

The doctors could say:

"It is so lucky you have caught it genitally as it cannot cause any further complications."

(This is because very, very rarely a facial infection reactivates in the eye or brain, which is nasty and will need to be treated with aciclovir, whereas genitally it does nothing like that.)