

How will HIV change me?

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Right now, you might be feeling like your life will never be the same again. You might be feeling angry, confused, guilty, depressed or shocked. All of these feelings are completely normal.

There are many HIV positive people living in Australia today who are enjoying full and active lives. Many of these people continue to live their lives in much the same way as they did before diagnosis. You might have many identities or ways of thinking about yourself – mother, Asian man, gay man, teacher or Buddhist. Working out where your HIV status fits into your identity may take a little while, or it might be a relatively simple process for you.

Every person deals with identity differently, although there are some things that may help if you're trying to figure out where HIV fits in with your identity. Talking to other positive people about their experiences and how they coped can be useful. Your local AIDS Council or [PLWHA](#) [1] Person (or People) Living with HIV/AIDS. organisation should be able to provide information on support groups for HIV positive people in your area. Peer support groups can be helpful if you want to talk to other people about their experiences.

If the idea of peer support doesn't appeal to you or if you are finding you need more help to come to terms with your HIV status and working through any identity issues, you can also talk to a counsellor or a one on one peer worker. Your local AIDS Council can provide advice on one on one peer support or counselling.

Michelle: "It was an up and down experience for me, but more up than down. It forced me to look at my life and what was wrong with it and funnily enough, it actually gave me a sense of purpose that I didn't have."

[◀ What does HIV infection mean in the long term? \[2\]up \[3\]Fact or fiction? ▶ \[4\]](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/119>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/what-does-hiv-infection-mean-in-the-long-term>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/fact-or-fiction>