

Living Sphere Circle of Friends



Friendship Rings show support

Living with the herpes virus can be an emotionally isolating experience. Gradually accepting it, coming to terms with it, and feeling positive about the future can be difficult for some people. The value of peer support should not be underestimated - just knowing that others are in the same position and feeling similar emotions can be very beneficial.

A program has been developed to help people overcome the feelings of isolation sometimes associated with having herpes - allowing those 'in the know' to recognise each other as they go about their daily lives. Introducing the 'Living Sphere Circle of Friends' - a supportive program for people with herpes which aims to raise self-esteem and provide opportunities to build new friendships and show your support for others.

Background - in early 2005 an idea was put forward that a symbol was needed which would allow people with herpes to recognise each other. By wearing or displaying this optional symbol, people could locate others who are also living with the herpes virus. The original idea was to wear two rings of any description on the little finger of the right hand. However after a trial period, feedback suggested that it was physically uncomfortable to wear two rings on the little finger.

Update - the concept has now been simplified to wearing just one ring (of any description and to suit the taste of the wearer) on the little finger of the right hand (the traditional greeting hand). Although some people, with and without herpes, may already wear a ring on their little finger, this should not create any unnecessary confusion as it is only a symbol of support and friendship, not a blatant statement.

The Predicament - most people with herpes will agree that whilst the physical symptoms of herpes are indeed unwelcome, the psychological and emotional factors are a much bigger issue. Negative feelings can fluctuate from mild to severe, impacting on self-confidence and social skills which can affect all areas of a person's life.

People with herpes often find themselves in awkward situations when forming relationships and usually become good at avoiding social settings where they may end up in such situations. Side-stepping social functions becomes the norm for many people with herpes, with social isolation and depression a common result.

The Ring Thing - medical science has so far been able to relieve and repress the physical symptoms. It is hoped that the psychological pain and emotional distress mentioned above, and indeed expressed in stories such as those posted on the Living Sphere website, can be partly relieved by simply being able to recognise others during normal day to day activities. This can be done inconspicuously by wearing a ring that suits you, when it suits you, on the little finger of the right hand. It may take a year before you shake hands with someone who also supports this concept, but until then, you can stay positive and feel good about showing your support for others with herpes.

Living Sphere Circle of Friends - The founders of the Living Sphere website were approached to help promote the concept of a supportive symbol for people living with herpes. Obviously such a simple, subtle, positive, life-affirming concept fitted in beautifully with Living Sphere's Mission, so there was never a question about our willingness to support and develop this concept.

Wearing a ring on your little finger, participating in the 'Ring Thing' or as we now prefer to call it 'The Living Sphere Circle of Friends' is one simple way you can show your support for people with herpes, seek out like minded people who also support the concept, and, feel good about yourself while you are doing it. (It's also a great excuse to splurge on something nice for yourself. And, a little retail therapy never hurt anyone!)

Living Sphere Mission Statement:

Living Sphere is devoted to promoting and supporting herpes self-help, social and support groups; providing practical advice and lifestyle tips for people living with the Herpes virus; increasing public awareness of the virus through marketing campaigns and publications; providing opportunities to share experiences and connect with people who are in a similar situation; offering one-on-one peer support through the Aussie H-Mate program; and, most important of all, reassuring people that they are not alone.