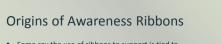
Cyber-Ribbons: The Influence of Internet Support Groups on Healing From Illness. Crystal Duncan Lane, Ph.D., CFLE





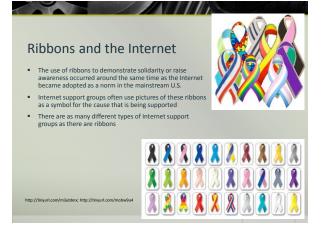


- Some say the use of ribbons to support is tied to military use of ribbons for awarding valor
- Others attribute it to the tying of yellow ribbons around trees during the Vietnam War
 - 1973: Tony Orlando and Dawn sang "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree."
- 1992: Red ribbons began symbolizing AIDS awareness.
- "The Year of the Ribbon," was declared by the NY Times
- The use of different colored ribbons exploded during the 1990's

http://tinyurl.com/k3mypSo; http://tinyurl.com/klth733



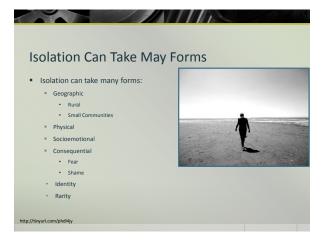




Why Are Internet Support Groups Important? The same reason that we use ribbons: To raise awareness and bring solidarity Virtual Community Building This is crucial when illness and disease is the primary concern feel panicked Internet Illness Support Groups can help those who are feel panicked Internet Illness Support Groups can help those who are singlated (and who are not) sort through confusing and scary information

http://tinyurl.com/n864zx9





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Physical Isolation



 People who do not have the physical ability or means to seek out resources or support for their condition can greatly benefit from Internet Illness Support Groups

- Because people with these issues often depend on others for travel to a health care provider, they often wait to call for help until
- Internet Illness Support Groups can help them ascertain when they must see a medical professional
- They can also provide crucial socioemotional support

http://tinyurl.com/oeqv3nb

Socioemotional Isolation

Geographic Isolation

understanding their illness: What is "normal" What is not normal

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA)

Designation by the Federal Government

Living in a rural area can increase the potential for isolation in general

Rural areas of the U.S. that have a shortage of primary medical or dental care

Illness Support Groups can provide people with a vital resource for

Along with basic socioemotional support, in these areas in particular. Internet

Specialized medical care is very often nonexistent in these areas

Travelling to see a health care professional can be costly

Is it worth the investment to see a medical professional

 When someone has socioemotional reasons for either not leaving their home or visiting a health care professional, Internet Illness Support Groups can be crucial in increasing their wellness

Intense anxiety

Generalized anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, etc

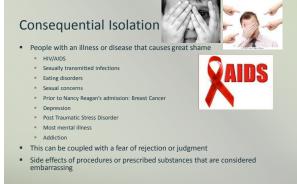
- Depression
- Grief and bereavement

http://tinyurl.com/qjtmqzo; http://tinyurl.com/nmwnq6w

- Agoraphobia (fear of open spaces)
- Latrophobia (fear of health care professionals)

Trypanophobia (fear of needles)

Agoraphobia Awarenes



http://tinyurl.com/nnza94d; http://tinyurl.com/q9mcavm; http://tinyurl.com/np9zo7q

Rarity Isolation

- People with rare illnesses or diseases are especially vulnerable to the socioemotional impact of their condition
- Believing we are the only person experiencing our situation increases fear and stress
- This can increase the impact of physiological issues such as illness and disease
- It is important to know we are not alone and have solidarity
- Internet Illness Support Groups provide a crucial service to people in this situation

http://tinyurl.com/p4tpour



Identity Isolation

- People who are well known in a community, state, or the nation may avoid seeking assistance due to community member or media interest
- This translates to their family members as well
- Public officials
- Religious officiates
- Educators
- Business owners
- Actors
- The medium of the Internet provides the opportunity for anonymity and allows these people to receive support without revealing their identity

http://tinyurl.com/ns9n5ft



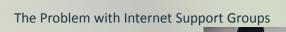
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Elizabeth Edwards used Internet Illness Support groups for dealing with the loss of her son, the experience of breast cancer, and the infidelity of her husband.

Compound Isolation • Experiencing more than one form of isolation compounds the suffering that is experienced due to the illness or disease. • Someone who is geographically isolated and also has the consequential isolation of carrying the diagnosis of the mental illness Schizophrenia has increased needs for support: • Assistance in figuring out if/when they should spend resources to seek out health care • Assistance and support in understanding what they are feeling as normal/ not normal

- Support with having a stigmatized mental illness
- The more types of isolation faced by the person, the greater their need for support
- Internet Illness Support Groups are ideally suited for these scenarios

http://tinyurl.com/lyvears



- We must have access to the Internet
 - This requires a computer and reliable Internet connection
 Cost
 - Public computers are not always accessible and are not always private
- The Internet allows us to be whomever we want to be
- It is easy to be invisible
- This is a positive for people who need to hide their identity, but a negative for people who isolate themselves as a symptom of their diagnosis



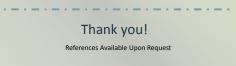
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The Problem with Internet Support Groups

- There is some advice that should only come from a medical professional
- Any interaction in Internet Illness Support Groups comes through the biases and worldview of the members
 - It is possible to get bad advice
- It is difficult to conduct accurate research on Internet Support Groups, so our knowledge is not as certain
- STILL: The benefits to these populations often FAR outweigh the risks

http://tinyurl.com/kxesvmh





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