Psoriasis Advocacy

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Fight Stigma With Advocacy

When your psoriasis flares, it does so for the world to see. This puts you in the uncomfortable position of having to manage not only the physical repercussions but the psychological ones as well. Your psoriasis can change the way you see yourself and the way other people see you. You can feel ashamed of how you look or angry when you hear people commenting on it.

Psoriasis will always be a part of your life. Accepting this fact and finding ways to reduce the stigma will not only make your life better but it will also improve quality of life for others with psoriasis.

Fighting the Stigma

As a person with psoriasis, the positive change you can facilitate for yourself is immeasurable. Here are some tips for changing perceptions and fighting the stigma:

- **Educate yourself.** Becoming an expert about psoriasis means that you are armed with the needed information to answer any question someone could pose. You may be able to anticipate a question before it is even asked and preemptively address an issue. Increased education can also help to improve your self-esteem and identity by normalizing your situation.
- **Build supports.** Now that you have all this information, share it. Speak with your family and friends about psoriasis. Let them know the physical and emotional impact. Be clear about what they can do to help and what is not helpful. Keeping it a secret can cause increased stress. Answer their questions and let them know that you are always willing to talk about it.
- **Educate others.** Explaining psoriasis to others is a weekly occurrence for many people. Experiment with different responses in different situations. Try to find a way to match your personality as well as your audience. A curious child staring at your arm will benefit from one explanation while an ignorant restaurant owner asking you to leave will require another. In either case, keep it short and simple. Too much information can overshadow your message. Ask if they would like more information about it.

- **Know when to cover up.** Providing education to others can still be exhausting and stressful when done right. When you are getting dressed for the day, take inventory of where you are going and your own level of stress. If the situation or stress level makes you overly uncomfortable, consider opting for long sleeves or pants. Allow yourself a break and let the advocacy begin again tomorrow.
- **Be comfortable with you.** The above tips can work but success depends on you. If you are feeling self-conscious or unhappy about your psoriasis, you will be less effective in reducing the stigma through advocacy. Spend some time thinking about your identity and the role psoriasis plays. Remember that it is only one aspect of who you are. If you are struggling with acceptance, counseling may be a good fit. A therapist can help process feelings and change your thinking to be more positive.

Conclusion

You know that you cannot control your psoriasis. Instead you set out to manage the psychological impact knowing that you will be confronted with curiosity, fear and ignorance on a daily basis. If you keep working on it, though, you will find a lot of love, acceptance and understanding.