

## Forgiveness and Loneliness in HIV+ Women: Anxiety's Correlates

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Anxiety, a common psychological symptom found in HIV+ adults, is associated with progression to AIDS (Hand, Phillips, & Dudgeon, 2006). A second common symptom for HIV+ adults is loneliness, which is associated with drug use and unsafe sexual practices (Ware, Wyatt, & Tugenberg, 2006). Forgiveness coping (a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to interpersonal conflict) has been associated with less anxiety

We used a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between forgiveness, loneliness and state and trait anxiety in 29 adult HIV+ women (96% African-American) who completed the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Yamhure, Snyder, Hoffman, & Rasmussen, 2002), the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996, and the State-Trait Anxiety Scale (Spielberger, 1983). Two models (state anxiety and trait anxiety as the outcome variables) were analyzed to compare forgiveness and loneliness to both types of anxiety. A multiple regression analysis of model 1 showed participants with higher forgiveness ( $\beta=-.7, t=-4.4, p <.001$ ) also reported significantly lower levels of state anxiety and accounted for 45% of the variance ( $\text{adj. } R^2=.45, F(3, 30), p<.001$ ), however loneliness did not reach significance. However, in model 2, a regression analysis revealed forgiveness ( $\beta=-.6, t=-5.4, p<.001$ ) and loneliness ( $\beta=-.4, t=-3.2, p<.01$ ) were significantly inversely related to trait anxiety and accounted for 66% of the variance ( $\text{adj. } R^2=.66, F(3, 30), p<.001$ .)

Loneliness' inverse relationship to trait anxiety was not intuitive and contradicted our original hypothesis. We speculate that loneliness might result from avoidance coping behavior associated with disclosure and stigma issues for HIV+ women. While forgiveness may reduce short- and long-term anxiety, increased loneliness may only reduce trait anxiety due to use of isolation as a coping mechanism for HIV stigma. Clinical interventions that develop forgiveness skills and attend to loneliness may improve the quality of life of HIV+ adult women.