

SPEAKER 1: The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature, which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Oh yes, you've tuned in to "After Hours," a continuing tradition on KPFT at Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of "After Hours" is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music geared for gay and lesbian people.

Here at "After Hours," we may be diverse, but we have one thing in common. We are out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets. That means standing up for yourself, taking responsibility for your own life, and being proud of who you are.

Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of age, job, or frame of mind. That's OK. We're here for you too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of "After Hours."

HOWARD Dead space.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Bum, bum, bum. No dead space. No dead space.

HOWARD Melissa, you there?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Hi, Melissa. Can you hear us? We're doing this show tonight for Melissa.

HOWARD Melissa, who's kind of lost. And she'll be taking your calls tonight, Houston.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Melissa's taking your calls, and she's confused. But we are too, so that-- so we'll just all fit in right together.

HOWARD Good morning, Houston.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Good morning, Howard "Big Daddy" McHale.

HOWARD I'm here, baby. It's been a month since we've been here, a little bit longer.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Actually, it's been a little bit longer. It's been about five weeks.

HOWARD God, I hope they missed us out there.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Did you miss us?

HOWARD Did you miss us?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: What about-- what was this name with the boots?

HOWARD I don't know. What about those poor kids out at the--

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Out at the summit, the security people at summit are--

HOWARD He better call us tonight because we were here for you.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: That's the only reason we came back was because of you guys. What's going on tonight, Big Daddy?

HOWARD Oh, there is so much going on in this town tonight. I can't believe it. I swear to God, I saw 20 U-Hauls moving to

MCHALE: Dallas this weekend. The Brick must be having a [INAUDIBLE].

SCOTT LEWIS: They're having a flashlight party at The Brick.

HOWARD And they're getting out of town. Hey, I'm here. Are you here? What's going on in Houston? Gay pride's getting

MCHALE: ready to happen. Remember?

SCOTT LEWIS: Is it? God, that's a month away.

HOWARD Oh, I'm excited.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: It didn't even seem like it because it's usually another month later. But because the whole Stonewall celebration and everything's been pushed up.

HOWARD And I know all of you sitting out there underneath your pillows listening tonight, we have got so much to talk

MCHALE: about. And we're here for three hours tonight with ourselves, no "Queer Music Zone."

SCOTT LEWIS: No, we're not going to have that tonight.

HOWARD No music, no. We're going to have a little bit of music.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Yeah, we're going to have music all night long, just not the "Queer Music Zone" because Jimmy is in Hawaii with his filthy rich lover.

(SINGING) Aloha [INAUDIBLE], aloha [INAUDIBLE].

HOWARD She ought to stay over there. What the hell. But anyway, yes, it's Scott and Howard tonight. And we are so

MCHALE: excited because we haven't done this in a long time.

SCOTT LEWIS: It seems like five weeks. And tell them what we have coming up on the show, Big Daddy.

HOWARD Oh, about what? Mauling monkeys?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Well, we are going to talk about mauling monkeys. But before we get to that, we have a very special guest in the house.

HOWARD Who's just shaved off his beard. I'm so bummed out.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Bart Loeser from--

HOWARD AIDS Foundation Houston.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Just from Montrose in general, basically, but also very well known for the AIDS Foundation, his work with the AIDS Foundation Houston, is here to talk about Beyond Intimacy, is the name of a new workshop he's got.

HOWARD Sounds like sex with you. How do you wake you up?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: That is beyond intimacy, sex with me. But we know the facts. And I think we're as a community pretty well educated, so what's the next step? What's the next information that we need to know? Do I sound really nasally or is that just me?

HOWARD No, it's probably from that haircut that you just got. Listen, I'm suffering with sinuses.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Do you like the new color?

HOWARD It is wonderful. Violet is such a good color on you, girl.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: I said, Dame Edna, I like that look.

HOWARD I don't know about you, but the sinuses are killing. I cannot breathe in this town. What is the hell happening?

MCHALE: What's going on around here?

SCOTT LEWIS: I think it might be those little bushes that the bees are always pollinating in.

HOWARD I got to stay out of Memorial Park. I just got to.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Well, you've got to stay out of those bushes that the bees pollinate in.

HOWARD Something-- let me tell you. And I am about 30 years old, around there.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: In the neighborhood.

HOWARD But for the first time in my life, I found out why flowers are colorful and they smell.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Why is that?

HOWARD And why are you colorful and why do you smell, Scott? It's to attract bees.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Probably not for the same reason.

HOWARD It is to attract bees.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: You attract bees with honey.

HOWARD Because they kind of pollinate and do all that ritual stuff that breeders kind of do in offspring and all that

MCHALE: madness, but that's what happens. Did you know that?

SCOTT LEWIS: Whew. And we digress.

HOWARD Oh. Like the birds and the bees, I don't know. Anyway, what are we talking about tonight? I am so excited. I'm so

MCHALE: excited to be here.

SCOTT LEWIS: And I'm excited for you to be here. Are the blinds closed? I don't want to get shot. We'll be closing the blinds shortly.

HOWARD And we've got three hours with just and me and our guest.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: And Bart Loeser and Melissa.

HOWARD Melissa?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Melissa is on the phones. We'll be taking your phone calls tonight at 526-KPFT, 526-5738. We'll talk about whatever you want to talk about. No topic is taboo here at KPFT.

HOWARD Nothing taboo tonight.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: So before we come back with-- we're going to come right back with Bart Loeser and talk about Beyond Intimacy. But first, I want to do a song that I just absolutely love.

HOWARD The Village People?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: No, we're not going to do anybody you've dated. We're going to do a song from Sade, which is a brand new song that she's done. And it's off the *Philadelphia* soundtrack, which, as you all know, *Philadelphia*, a major blockbuster, the first mainstream media movie about AIDS, and it has just blown the doors off of everybody's wildest imagination and guaranteed that we're going to see a lot more coming up from Hollywood on this front. It's called "Please Send Me Someone to Love." Imagine that.

HOWARD Send me 10 people to love.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Please. 12, 15, we'll take turns. Take a number. Now serving 43.

HOWARD Call 526-KPFT. We're listening, Houston. We want to talk tonight.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: "Please Send Me Someone to Love" by Sade, from the *Philadelphia* soundtrack.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

HOWARD I think we were falling asleep at the controls.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Was I? I was not, either. I tell you, that Sade, she just does something for me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Not enough to hear another song from, but she does-- is she Hispanic. Don't try, queen.

HOWARD I wonder if she has a goatee. There's nothing like a Hispanic woman with a goatee. You know what I mean?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Yeah.

HOWARD That would drive me crazy.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: You've had several of them, haven't you?

HOWARD One or two. Anyway, anyway, let's talk about something going on in the news tonight. First of all, we got to say

MCHALE: Hello to a bunch of people, don't we?

SCOTT LEWIS: Let's talk with Bart first, and then talk about the news later.

HOWARD We're going to talk-- oh, that's right. Bart, do you have to leave?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: No, I can be here as long as you all want me to be here.

HOWARD Hey, might [INAUDIBLE].

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Bart, you leave yourself wide open. Let's talk with Bart, first, and then get into the and get into the news about the monkeys molesting the women.

HOWARD Oh, I wish I was in India right now.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: We do, too. Bart. Bart Loeser from the AIDS Foundation Houston is here. And Bart, you're known as probably the most educated or the leading educator on HIV and AIDS issues in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community. Did I include everyone?

BART LOESER: Generally, the safer sex guy. Yeah.

SCOTT LEWIS: The safer sex guy.

HOWARD Well, straight people have safe sex, don't they?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Oh, definitely.

HOWARD So let's not segregate here. Let's just say the educator of Houston in a hole.

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Among many, yes. I'd be happy with that.

SCOTT LEWIS: We talked the other day on the telephone about a new workshop you put together. Everybody, I'm sure, knows about the safer sex workshop that you did and have been doing for quite some time, put together. Done it in schools, in churches, at clubs, been out in front of the clubs passing out safer sex information.

But now you've got a new workshop that you're working on called Beyond Intimacy. Tell us a little bit about that and how it's different from the first workshop.

BART LOESER: Well, the whole workshop is basically called Beyond Intimacy-- Slipping and Sliding In Houston. And what this workshop is all about, it's actually taken directly from something they've been doing quite some time up at the AIDS Resource Center in Dallas and actually is being done in several different places around the country.

It was a workshop that was put together to deal with the issues of how people who are even been practicing safer sex have slipped every once in a while. Sometimes they don't always practice safer sex. Usually they try to, and there's a lot of people, of course, who never have. But what we're trying to do is reach the people who sometimes make some mistakes for one reason or another.

The workshop addresses many, many different dimensions that affect whether or not people have safer sex, including the use of alcohol and drugs, self esteem, the ability to talk to your partner about sex before actually getting sexually involved, the ability to get beyond the embarrassment of sexual issues, period, plus just getting in touch with our own sexuality, which is a big problem for anybody, but especially for gay men who are at high risk for HIV infection as well.

HOWARD You know, Bart, I've had many people ask me and I've often asked myself in the middle of sex or many times

MCHALE: after sex, oops, did I slip? Oh, am I doing something wrong? Exactly-- try to clue in our listeners tonight-- what is a slip?

BART LOESER: Well, a slip is perhaps getting involved with somebody and having sex with them, and then thinking, wait a minute, we're not wearing a condom if you're having intercourse, let's say. And then, oh, we've got to stop what we're doing and put it back and put something on or go get something.

A lot of people, they get carried away. Or they wake up the next morning and they realized they had a one-night stand with somebody, or even was with somebody that they knew, but they were under the influence. Their judgment was impaired and they made a mistake that night.

And there's no guarantee that the person they had sex with had HIV or something else, but the chances are fairly good, and the chances, if you had unprotected sex, especially intercourse, the chances would be pretty good of getting infected. Even if you know everything there is to know about safer sex and AIDS, you still can slip up.

So it's a workshop that really explores all the different issues of getting to know ourselves and getting in touch with our own intimacy. And that's what it's really all about. It's for any person, period, but especially for gay men because we don't really have a chance to go through a workshop that really explores in depth how we feel about our own sexuality. How do we communicate that with a sex partner? What do we do when we get into sexual situations? How are we? Do we have a hard time finding partners? Is it easy? If we find someone, do we have an easy time even talking about sex?

SCOTT LEWIS: Let's start at the very beginning, with the very, very basics before we get into where we're going, which is a little more forward, a little more a step up. What are the risks of different sexual practices? For example, you hear oral sex is a low risk between two males. Between two females, is it a different risk?

BART LOESER: Well, risk is relative, although I would not call oral sex between two men low risk. No, that's not true at all, actually.

What it is, it's a relative risk. The more fluid that could have HIV in it that you could come in contact with-- that includes blood or sexual fluid, semen, pre-cum, or a woman's vaginal fluids, could also include her menstrual blood-- if you come in contact with any of these three fluids, blood, semen, vaginal fluids, then you're at risk. How much risk depends on what's the likelihood it's going to get into your bloodstream. Without any cuts, sores, or abrasions, especially fresh ones, it's probably a lot less likely you'll get infected, even if you do come in contact with those fluids.

So if you're having oral sex and you're going down on somebody, that's the person who's at risk, who gets those fluids in their mouth. That partner is the one who's at risk. And then it depends what's the chance of getting into the bloodstream. Well, there are blood vessels underneath the tongue that are very close to the surface of the skin, so that's a high risk, even if you didn't have cuts, sores, or abrasions. But we're not really seeing a lot of cases from things that are just, I guess you'd say, more casual oral sex situations.

But the more fluid you get in the mouth, like someone climaxes in the mouth or you get a lot of pre-cum in there, and if you have any fresh cuts, sores, abrasions, you just brushed your teeth, you flossed, you've got gum disease, you just ate some food with chips. You mentioned Mexican food earlier. And you might have got an abrasion or something in the mouth. Any of these things could increase substantially the risk of these fluids getting into your bloodstream, thus they could infect you. So oral sex does have a risk.

SCOTT LEWIS: And is there a greater risk when you swallow as opposed to when you don't?

BART LOESER: That's a tough question. I mean, certainly saliva has a lot of gastric enzymes that could help to kill HIV given enough time. So if you swallow the fluids, probably some of those fluids that go down into the stomach would be-- the virus that could be in it would probably be killed. But we're also talking about there's still fluids in the mouth. And if you've got any cuts, sores, abrasions, or--

HOWARD Ulcers.

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Yeah, or if you have deep oral sex, deep throating they call it, these sort of things could also increase abrasions in the throat, which would increase your risk.

HOWARD Bart, let's talk about real honesty here, because I know that there are straight people out there in our audience tonight who say, this can't happen to me. I can have oral sex on my partner, whether it be a male or female, and nothing's going to happen. And the honest to God truth, in my own run-throughs with my sexuality, I actually feel the same way also.

Am I naive? Or does the medical community not really know the facts? I mean, are you guessing? Is education just to a certain point where people-- I mean, are we all hysteria? So many people, straight people out there, still think this is still a gay man's disease. Is it hysteria? What's going on?

BART LOESER: I hear your frustration here, and it's actually the frustration that many people have about oral sex issue. And that's why actually there's going to be a workshop that's going to be dealing with a lot of issues. But on Monday night at the Wyndham Warwick Hotel, Martin Delaney's going to come down from Project Inform and tackle that very question.

I do want to answer, though, that-- and that would be at 7:00 on Monday night at the Wyndham Warwick Hotel. And it is free. And Martin Delaney is just wonderful anyways. And it's open to anybody, whether you're HIV positive or not.

The issue of oral sex is always one of relative risk. I cannot say, well, in that situation, you definitely got it, or in this situation, you didn't definitely get it. You can never say that.

All I can do is say, well, what level of risk do you or your sexual partner feel comfortable with? Some people feel absolutely uncomfortable with any form of unprotected oral sex, some people will consider nothing but unprotected oral sex. They said, I wouldn't put a condom on a penis.

HOWARD I had friends of mine in New York City when I lived in New York would not French kiss.

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Well, that's a bit more hysteria due to the fact that they think, well, I guess you could have blood in saliva. It wouldn't be the saliva itself, I want to make that very clear. Saliva, as well as all other body fluids than blood and sex fluids, basically don't have any risk. Breast milk is the only other questionable one.

But saliva, sweat, tears, all those other body fluids you don't need to worry about, unless you've got significant blood in there. And you wouldn't have significant blood unless you have a significant injury. So you wouldn't be kissing somebody who's bleeding from the mouth unless they have really bad gum disease or they just had a major injury to the mouth. So in that situation, I don't think you'd be kissing them in the first place. So basically, kissing isn't a risk. Oral sex, the risk climbs, the greater the chance you could have any obvious cuts, sores, or abrasions.

Personally, we all have to make our own decisions as to how much personal risk we feel comfortable with. I don't have a problem with oral sex either, unprotected, unless I start to come in contact with pre-cum. And I wouldn't personally feel comfortable with having oral sex with someone to climax. I think that's asking a bit too much, with too much fluid in the mouth. And if there could be a cut, sore, or abrasion, it increases the risk.

Now, of course, I'm openly HIV positive, too, so I don't want to infect a partner. So I try to be somewhat liberal about it. But we have to take each person's own fears into consideration, which means knowing your partner and talking about what safer sex means to each of you.

SCOTT LEWIS: We're going to have to stop every few minutes here to let people know that we're in the middle of our May drive here at KPFT. KPFT is a public station. We're supported by our listeners.

And it's May, so it's time to raise some money from our listeners. So we're going to have to break just every few minutes and let people know that if they call in at 526-5738, 526-KPFT, with a \$35 donation, they can get a KPFT mug, a \$60 donation a KPFT t-shirt, \$90 a mug and a t-shirt.

A BBC bag is what you would receive if you made \$120 donation. And for \$250, a day sponsorship and a BBC bag and a subscription to *London Calling*. At \$500, you get a weekend with "Big Daddy" Howard McHale.

HOWARD Wait a minute. If I remember correctly, those pictures were from Cancun.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: It's 526-5738. You can call in and help support. KPFT has the only gay and lesbian radio programming in South Texas that you can listen to. There's this program every Saturday night, "Gay and Lesbian Voices" every Friday night. Or you can also call in to tonight at 526-5738, 526-KPFT, with questions about this that we're discussing here with Bart Loeser, safer sex and Beyond Intimacy.

Going back to the basics. What are considered-- I mean, basically any contact, from what I'm hearing, almost any contact sexual is a risk. And yet, out in the streets you're told, oh, well, don't worry about oral sex. This is not that big of a deal. But rimming over here is a greater risk or this over here. What's the truth?

BART LOESER: Well, first of all, I do want to encourage everybody to realize that just because our group of friends may be doing certain things, having certain behaviors, that doesn't mean that's what everyone is doing. And actually, it's very clear that a lot of people-- I'd even say most people in the gay male community don't practice safer sex on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, for the most part, we, like anyone else, look for excuses not to have to worry about safer sex, like assume we could have a partner who doesn't have HIV for whatever reason, than just the simple fact of practicing safer sex every time.

I think with y'all, y'all are kind of leaders of the community. You're involved, you see what's going on. But a lot of people aren't aware that people who aren't in the mainstream community are not necessarily practicing the same issues that we are. They haven't necessarily even been hit the same way we have.

And so I think there's sometimes a misperception by many of us in the gay community that, hey, safer sex, everyone's practicing it. This isn't an issue anymore. No one needs to go to safer sex workshops. And that actually isn't necessarily true.

But you do make a good point, Scott, that risk, period, just like the risk of getting in your car every day, you could die in a car wreck, whether you're a passenger or the driver. Risk is involved with just the act alone, if you can come in contact with someone else's blood or sexual fluids.

But whether or not it's going to get in your bloodstream is what's really the key here, and that's what's generally very difficult to do. Outside of unprotected intercourse, the risk of getting infected with HIV is pretty low. But there are times when even oral sex can be a high risk. And that's what I encourage people to think about is that, if you've got bleeding gums or you've got gum disease or you just brushed your teeth and then decided to go down on somebody who could have HIV and you get their fluids in the mouth, then it could be a high risk. I can't guarantee you'll get infected. Not that many people do from oral sex, but it could happen.

SCOTT LEWIS: Which raises a question that I've asked somebody myself not too long ago. Brushing your teeth, before or after? Are you supposed to-- aren't you not supposed to brush your teeth before oral sex?

BART LOESER: How much before we were referring to?

SCOTT LEWIS: Just like, oh God, I have bad breath. I want to brush my teeth real quick before I go down on him.

BART LOESER: Good point. Or kiss somebody.

SCOTT LEWIS: These are things these are things that I don't know. I've passed out condoms in front of high schools and middle schools, and there are still questions that I have. So I know that 16, 17, 18-year-old kids and 35, 40-year-old closeted gay men that are listening, they're not going to know either.

BART LOESER: That's right. And that's a big factor is that, generally, you don't have obvious cuts, sores, abrasions. I mean, you cut yourself, how long does it take to stop bleeding? Your body is starting to protect itself not only from getting blood out of it, but also letting things into the bloodstream. Thus within a period of an hour or two, generally small, minor cuts, sores, abrasions, like with brushing your teeth or flossing, is pretty much going to be healed enough where I'd say your risk from oral sex is diminished substantially after an hour or so after brushing.

But if you just brush your teeth then start kissing someone, then we're talking about some risk. But still, I would not say-- I would not tell you, oh yes, you will get infected that way. The main way people are getting infected, especially male to male, is from unprotected intercourse. That is the basics. That is the fact.

HOWARD That is the fact. Now, I really want to cut the crap here because what I don't understand, and I'm sure everyone in America doesn't understand, is that the right wing, especially, attacks us because they say that abstinence-- and of course, do you advocate that at all?

BART LOESER: I talk about abstinence or postponement of sexual activity until you feel it's right for you is really the key. But if you plan to have sex with someone, plan to be prepared, that's all. To be sexually responsible means having sex with someone that you know their HIV status and you take precautions.

HOWARD So you should ask every person before you have sex their HIV status?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Well, are they going to tell you the truth?

HOWARD Well, should we just not just have sex with anyone and believe that everyone is HIV positive? [INAUDIBLE]

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Well, that would be ideal, except most people don't do it in practice. That's the thing. It's amazing.

I'm HIV positive. I'm very open about it and don't look like someone you would typically think could have HIV, if that's even a statement, but a lot of people do [INAUDIBLE].

SCOTT LEWIS: Right, but a lot of people believe that way.

BART LOESER: They think, oh, well, they'd look sick, so I wouldn't have to worry about that. But the who fact is I don't. Most people would think, gosh, he couldn't have it.

And I'm very open about the fact that I'm HIV positive, and it's amazing how it freaks people out. And all of a sudden they start questioning thing questioning everything they ever knew about safer sex because now they know they're with someone who's HIV positive. And it's amazing. I mean, we shouldn't really be like that because, let's face it, one out of every two or three gay men that you could probably have sex with has HIV, whether you're 15 years old or 50.

And this is something that's really scary. I do HIV counseling and testing over at the Montrose Clinic from time to time as a volunteer. And just a couple of weeks ago, I had a 17-year-old come in. And as he started talking about his sexual activity, I thought, well, gosh it's pretty cool. He's 17. He's known he's been gay for many, many years. He's been sexually active since 15 and feels good about himself.

And then we started talking about sexual activity and safety. He practices anal sex. And I said, and do you use protection properly? He said, well, I don't use condoms.

And I thought, well, could you tell me a little more about that? I want to try to understand since this is 1994 and AIDS has been around so long. Well, he doesn't know anybody who has HIV or AIDS. I can understand that.

SCOTT LEWIS: And they're not getting taught it in the schools.

BART LOESER: Well, even know somewhat about AIDS. But when I asked him, well what about your sexual partners? Do you realize one out of two or three could have HIV? That shocked him, and then he started getting upset and crying. And once he finally calmed down, I said, well, but that doesn't guarantee that you've been infected. But I'd say you're at extremely high risk.

Now let's talk about what's going on here. Who are these guys do you think you're having sex with? He says, well, they're straight. I said, these guys that you're having actual sex with are straight.

Now, first of all, let me educate you a little bit about what being gay is. Sexual orientation, you're either gay, straight, or bisexual. Most people are probably some degree of bisexual. But if you're gay, you couldn't really understand what heterosexual sex is really all about, or at least you wouldn't click for you.

And if you're straight, same thing. Straight people have a hard time understanding, well, how could a man find another man sexually attractive or a woman find another woman sexually attractive? But he thinks, because he's with these men, they couldn't have it because they're young, and the main thing is because they all have girlfriends.

And so I kind of straightened them out about that. I'd said, I don't know anyone under the age of 25 who never had a girlfriend, whether they had sex with them or not. If a gay male or bisexual male in high school probably had girlfriends, it's not that uncommon.

And then we talked about safer sex. He was supposed to practice it from that point on. He came back two weeks later for his results, and unfortunately I had to give him a positive test result.

HOWARD OK. Now, right there, you said, unfortunately you had to give him a positive test result. HIV positive does not mean you're going to die.

BART LOESER: No, it does not. But it's not the best thing to be diagnosed with either, especially if you can avoid it.

HOWARD I mean, I'd rather be HIV positive than I would have lymphoma or skin cancer or lung cancer. Do you feel that the scare of being HIV positive is causing people to die? I have friends of mine who found out they were HIV positive, said they're going to die, and boom, they're gone. And then I have friends who come to terms with life and realize the fact that maybe this is just a warning sign.

Bart, I know people are dying. I go to four funerals a month. I know that. I know HIV is there. I know it's a killer.

Something good has got to come out of this and there's got to be something positive. And there's got to be something that they're not telling us.

BART LOESER: OK, I want to hit on that, Howard. I mean, that's a whole other area that we can go into, talking about living with HIV. If I had a choice today about being HIV positive or not being, I would choose to be HIV positive. My life would not be where it is today. I wouldn't be as happy with who I am. I wouldn't really have my life together to the point where I do today, except for the fact that I had that as a catalyst in my life.

But to say that you have a choice today not to get infected, I would not encourage people to get infected to go through the things I had to go through to get to where I am today with my life. And I don't believe it's necessarily a death sentence. God knows we could come up with a cure two or three years from now. I don't know.

But the whole point is, why get infected in the first place if it's an easily preventable disease? Now, this young man not only was in denial, he knew he could get infected if he was a gay man, but he thought he was only having sex with straight men who he didn't think could ever be infected. So that was his form of denial.

Also, he said these guys had girlfriends. Now, I don't know which or how many of these guys he had sex with who had HIV. But if they've all got girlfriends and they're having sex with those girlfriends, also those girlfriends could be infected.

HOWARD Whose responsibility is it to educate the youth right now in Houston and throughout America? Is it you and I? **MCHALE:** Because sooner or later the AIDS crisis is going to crumble into the straight society, and it's going to become a real problem for them. And they're going to look back on the gay community, they're going to say, God, these guys, they handled it real well. And we forget lesbians in this is also.

BART LOESER: True.

HOWARD What's going to happen when it goes full-blown into their structure and they're going to freak out? What's going to happen?

BART LOESER: They're going to freak out. I mean, that's really what has to happen. If you indeed have to know somebody that you can relate to who's infected with this disease to even begin to change your behavior, which is really the fact, unfortunately, then these people are going to have to know people just like them who got infected. And that's a scary thing because it's so easy to hide, since you could have HIV for 10 years or more without any signs or symptoms. So most of these people, especially heterosexuals, who have this disease don't even know they have it and would never tell anyone, so no one will know.

SCOTT LEWIS: We have a caller on the air. Let's take them.

HOWARD Are we there?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Caller, are you there? Caller, are you there? Caller, are you there?

RICK: Yes, there we go. Hi.

SCOTT LEWIS: And what's your name?

RICK: This is Rick.

SCOTT LEWIS: Hi, Rick. And what's your question?

RICK: I have a friend of mine who basically learned that he was HIV positive a while back, stayed in denial for quite a while. And when he finally started having problems as far as, I guess you would say, became sick and started having complications, basically pushed all of his friends away and didn't want anybody to sit around and feel sorry for him and such.

The big question I have-- I'm still trying to kind of find a way back to be supportive and such-- do you find it common that they would want to isolate themselves? Or maybe I can see during denial, but after they've come face to face with a problem and now seeking treatment, do you think it would be best to go ahead and kind of force yourself back to be supportive to them?

BART LOESER: Well, I think it's very important to be supportive of anybody with HIV. It's a devastating diagnosis, even though we're trying to get across to people it's not a death sentence. It's still something that there's a tremendous amount of misinformation out the community. There's lots of misinformation, like there's no decent medications you can take, AZT is poison. They claim all these crazy things that are not necessarily true at all. It's very individual.

But a lot of people, it takes them months, if not years, to begin to deal with these issues personally, psychologically, emotionally as well as physically, medically, seeing a doctor. A lot of people wait for years before they'll intervene, which is one of the reasons why, just as Howard was saying earlier, it seems like people who have a bad attitude about this disease seem to die much faster. Well, if people don't get tested early, they're going to wait until their immune systems are very weak and until they probably have a diagnosis of AIDS before they even find out that they've got it. And a lot of people, frankly, just wait a long time before they seek assistance, whether it's support through support groups or medical help or anything else.

I think that's why early intervention is so vitally important. If someone finds out they're HIV positive, I think they need to get in some programs fairly early on to begin to deal with some of the issues before denial sets in and then they want to stay away from the issue entirely.

HOWARD Yeah, but isn't denial sometimes a point of positive un-reinforcement?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: It depends on the degree of denial. If you deny that the symptoms you're having could possibly be HIV or could be AIDS-related symptoms-- and there are people who do that, too, or deny the fact, they even have HIV until they get sick-- I'd say, no, their denial is a killer.

Now, denial, to a different degree. I mean, I don't think about having HIV every day. So you could say, well, am I in denial? You could live for years with HIV without even having to know about it, and your immune system can still stay fairly strong.

I'm just saying, if you wait too long to do anything or you don't address these issues that are so vitally important-- look how many people out here in the world think they're going to live forever. Everyone thinks they're going to live forever until a friend of theirs dies. Have they written wills? Have they taken care of legal issues so that if their lover dies or they die, the family doesn't come in there and destroy whatever you two wanted set up?

So we all need to face some of the realities. But a lot of us are in denial about many issues, including HIV. So I'd say, wake up about all of these things. If it's relevant to your life, face some of these issues. There are people out there who are willing to help, lots of people.

SCOTT LEWIS: Thanks for your call, Rick. Y'all, don't forget that we are taking phone calls at 526-5738, 526-KPFT. We're taking your questions for Bart Loeser with the AIDS Foundation Houston, and we're also taking your phone calls for our May drive. We are a listener-supported station.

\$35 donation and you would receive a KPFT mug, \$60 donation a KPFT t-shirt. \$90, the mug and the t-shirt, \$120 for the BBC bag. \$250 and you would receive day sponsorship and a BBC bag plus a subscription to the *London Calling*. Don't know exactly what that is, but you'll get one of it with a \$250 donation.

Also, here at "After Hours"-- this is an exclusive just for "After Hours"-- I'm sure that we have some Fem2Fem fans out in our listening audience this evening. We have an autographed poster of Fem2Fem. You're not going to find this on any other KPFT program. For a \$90 credit card donation, you'll get the mug, the t-shirt, and an autographed poster from Fem2Fem just for a listener of "After Hours."

We have some more callers on the air. Let's take this first one.

HOWARD But did we talk about that \$500--

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: The \$500.

HOWARD [INAUDIBLE] you and me in Astroworld in those Speedos.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: They don't want to see me in a Speedo.

HOWARD Really.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Right. Caller, are you there? I think we did it too fast, or too long. We took too long. Caller, try back.

HOWARD Oh, I guess they hung up. Well, I really do love the Southwestern Bell Telephone [? connection. ?]

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Well, we tried.

HOWARD Melissa, what happened to that person on caller [? 8? ?]

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Melissa is in there working the phones. She has no more clue than we do, but we love her anyway.

HOWARD Hey, we want to hear from you, Houston, tonight. 526-KPFT.

MCHALE:

SPEAKER 2: No, you hung up on someone I was talking to.

SCOTT LEWIS: Oh, I'm sorry. Are you trying to pick up a date on the--

SPEAKER 2: Stop doing your laundry on the telephone.

SCOTT LEWIS: 526-KPFT, 526-5738 if you want to call in and make a pledge for our May drive or if you have a question for Bart Loeser from--

HOWARD [? I ?] just want to talk to you or me.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Yeah, just talk to Big Daddy or myself, Scott Lewis.

HOWARD Or if you want to talk to Melissa. Hey, she's back there.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Melissa's back there.

HOWARD [INAUDIBLE].

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: She does look great. I love that hair. Who does that hair, Melissa? No. No does that hair.

HOWARD No. OK, getting back to what we're talking about tonight, you know, Bart, I'm going to go off a way in a deep end because I sometimes tend to be real radical about HIV. Life goes on. We all die. Is this just something that is going to happen to us?

I mean, 200,000 people in this country die of heart disease and lung cancer in this country. Is it just something that we're going to have to deal with for the rest of our lives or what?

BART LOESER: Honestly? Yes. Yes, honestly, that's the way it's going to be, except the sad part is it is easily preventable. That's the whole point, is that basically, if you get yourself with a partner who doesn't have anything and you stay totally monogamous, you've got nothing to worry about.

But if you're going to be out there having sex with someone, and you don't know anything about them and you have no absolute idea whether or not they could have HIV or anything else, then of course, practice safer sex. It basically-- if everybody today used condoms for intercourse, whether male to male, male to female, whatever, if you used condoms for intercourse, we would practically see the stop of the sexual spread of HIV.

It's that easy to do, but it's not being done. And that's why we keep seeing it happening over and over again. Oral sex isn't that big an issue. The big issue is unprotected intercourse.

HOWARD Is semen the devil, the devil in all of this?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: That was the devil that just spoke to us.

HOWARD We're talking about semen here, not those guys in those oil rigs out in the middle of the Gulf. But we're talking

MCHALE: about semen, sperm. Is this the culprit?

BART LOESER: Well, blood is the fluid that actually has the most virus in it. That's where the virus thrives in. But during someone's life, during a male's life who has HIV, you have varying different degrees of high levels, high concentration of HIV, which would be also found in the semen and the pre-cum, which are very similar fluids, actually.

And the semen is the fluids that come with the sperm, it's not sperm itself. That's how woman could get pregnant but not yet get HIV infected. That happens. Look at Magic Johnson's wife.

But it's not the sperm. It's the semen or the pre-cum, also to a lesser extent, and I would say lesser, vaginal fluids. But they do have enough virus in it they can place someone at risk. Also, if a woman is on her menstrual cycle, now we're talking about menstrual blood that's mixed with the vaginal fluids, which makes it just as high risk as blood.

HOWARD OK, let's jump ahead and talk about-- I have friends of mine, one partner is HIV positive, the other one is HIV

MCHALE: negative. They did not know about each other's HIV status. One still remains negative after several years of unsafe sex. Why does that happen?

BART LOESER: Well, there's a lot of different reasons, but the primary reason I would say is that there's definitely the chance that the level of virus found in his system, the total load of virus, was so low in semen at that point that he was very unlikely to pass it at that time.

I would say, though, that could be-- you never know what period of time in someone's life when someone has HIV that they'd be more infectious than at other times. But no one is stating that from the day you get infected, you definitely have the same level-- that you can infect somebody at the same level from the day you get infected to the day you die. That's not true at all. The viral levels in your system goes up and down.

HOWARD Just like your T-cell count.

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: Right.

HOWARD Is this virus going to burn out after so many years?

MCHALE:

BART LOESER: I would hope so. But is that something to expect? No. It's really just now getting a stronghold into our society.

It really couldn't have hit at a worse time with the sexual revolution, the drug revolution. All the problems that are going on today make it perfect for something that is bloodborne or sexually transmitted to get into our society. But it has been around for at least 50 years or more, so this isn't a new disease. It's just something we've identified in this last generation.

HOWARD You're talking to Bart Loeser here on KPFT. Call us tonight with Scott and Big Daddy. We're here at 526-KPFT. And

MCHALE: Melissa is on the phone, and she's sleeping back there, gang. So talk to us.

SCOTT LEWIS: Caller, are you there?

VINCE: Yes.

SCOTT LEWIS: And your name?

VINCE: Vince.

SCOTT LEWIS: Vince, with the size 11 boots. [INAUDIBLE]. We remember.

HOWARD We miss you.

MCHALE:

VINCE: How y'all doing tonight?

SCOTT LEWIS: Wonder-- what are you not doing at the Ripcord?

VINCE: I'm too tired.

SCOTT LEWIS: Me too. Big Daddy too.

HOWARD [INAUDIBLE] not so tired.

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: We could wake up if you came over.

HOWARD Does your alarm clock work?

MCHALE:

SCOTT LEWIS: Does your alarm clock work?

VINCE: Sometimes.

SCOTT LEWIS: Oh, we're on our way. Do you have a question for Bart, Vince?

VINCE: Yes, I do. Bart, what is your opinion about the rumor or fact or maybe fact that AIDS could be a product of biological warfare?