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**Title: When STD results come back positive, real test begins**  
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STD testing probably wasn't your idea of adding a third party to the relationship, but you know it's necessary. Good work, Captain. A few days after the relatively easy procedure, the results are more difficult to handle. While your Partner's tests come back positive, you're feeling quite the opposite. Confused on how to deal with your Partner's condition, you wonder: What now? It's called a test for a reason. And the only way you're going to fail is by slapping some judgment on your newly Tested, especially if this is the first time the information is learned. This is still the same partner you felt good enough about to take this step with. Don't allow the STD to define the person.

Instead, consider this an opportunity to reach out. Consider it a privilege that your Tested felt safe enough to be vulnerable with you. Don't take the responsibility lightly. Choose not to form an opinion until you know the facts.

You'll never be closer to your Partner than at that moment. So, instead of reacting, take time and give some heart to the situation.

An open mind is crucial and so is information. Get yourself schooled and your questions answered. Go back to your doctor's office and have a live conversation. If necessary, find a specialist. The Internet is packed with informative Web sites, chat rooms and support groups. An enormous community is settled in the safety of cyberspace.

You stayed open enough to get intimate, now get intimate enough to keep your mind open and honest. Regardless of what you choose to do about the relationship, as a sexually active adult, it's likely you'll encounter this type of situation again. So, pay attention.

Once you really understand your feelings about your Tested--both with and without the STD--make a commitment: Stay or go. Deciding to leave doesn't make you a bad person, just an honest one. It's more about you and what you can handle at that point. Sympathy shouldn't be the only reason to stay. Don't serve up a pity party; it's more noble to go. Just be gracious when you exit.

Often, the stigma of an STD can outweigh its physical repercussions. Many STDs can be treated with medications--the same can't be said for those with cheapness, tacky taste and poor manners.

If you decide to stay, keep facing the challenge together. Seek out support systems through your doctor or hospital. Become part of a community.

The process will only serve to increase your connection. It's a long road. It always is when you're truly getting intimate with someone.

You can forever test away potential suitors, dismissing them on any number of reasonable imperfections. It is your choice to stay or go from any relationship. Just don't be waiting for that perfect combination of a healthy body, a flawless past, a riveting mind and spiritual decadence. You can always find a reason to leave. But know your Next will likely have a condition of a different sort.

The only thing for sure in a relationship is there will be bumps, whether they're physical or emotional. Everyone has them. They just ooze differently. Relationships are not perfect. People are not perfect, not even you.

Give yourself permission to respond honestly. Give yourself time. When you are ready, listen to your heart and honor it. Give the situation dignity by allowing yourself to fully understand it. There is nothing more infectious than that.

For more information about STDs visit [www.cdc.gov/std/](http://www.cdc.gov/std/) or [health.nih.gov/](http://health.nih.gov/). Call the Centers for Disease Control's National STD Hotline at 800-227-8922.

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