

DEALING WITH FEELINGS OF SHAME

JENNY'S STORY

When Jenny was a teenager her friends persuaded her to go swimming them at the local pool. It was something she hadn't done since she developed psoriasis a few years earlier. She had plaques on her arms and legs so was nervous but she tried on her swimming costume at home and her mother reassured that she looked fine and no-one would notice. At the pool Jenny and her friends laughed and joked around as they got changed. Jenny found she was really enjoying herself but she did notice a woman stare at her as she got undressed. The woman, who was at the pool with her young children, then went over to the lifeguard and pointed at Jenny. Jenny was in the water by this time and the lifeguard called her over and asked what was wrong with her skin. Jenny explained she had psoriasis and it wasn't contagious but by this time she felt so embarrassed. She left the pool as fast as she could and called her mother to collect her. Now as an adult, she knows the life guard should have handled the situation differently but she has never recovered from the feelings of shame and though she still swims in a public pool from time to time, she always feels anxious about her skin.

PSORIASIS AND SHAME

Psoriasis makes us feel ashamed of the way we look. Research tells us that feelings of shame is one of the most common emotions experienced by people with psoriasis. These feelings have a huge impact on how we live our lives, affecting what we do or don't do, even down to the grades we get at school.

WHAT CAN HELP?

- Noticing your thoughts and making sure you don't get caught up in a thought battle is very important and the first line of defence.
- Prepare yourself to deal with unwanted questions and comments.
- Remind yourself that you can take control of the conversation and steer the attention away from your skin.
- Being kind to yourself and reminding yourself that having psoriasis is not your fault can also help in the battle against shame.

EXERCISE

It can help to have one or two coping self-statements to help you manage your feelings of shame so they don't stop you doing or achieving the things that are important to you.

One of mine is, "No-one will care that I'm wearing trousers to a summer party. All they will remember is how much fun they had and not what I wore."

Another is "No-one important will judge me for having psoriasis and if anyone comments, I will use it as an opportunity to educate them."

Your coping self-statements could be more simple like "I won't let psoriasis stop me" or "I can do this".

Write your statements below:

WRITE YOUR STATEMENTS ON CARD AND KEEP IT IN YOUR WALLET. YOU CAN TAKE IT OUT & READ IT TO GIVE YOU MOTIVATION AND COURAGE.