



How I've

strong

IS STILL PERCEIVED AS ITS CONSEQUENCES

munity and thinks there needs to be an awareness drive. She says it's inevitable that human beings will continue being sexually active (many with multiple partners) without having knowledge about the sexual health of the person who they are in a relationship with.

"I met a Sikh woman in her early 30s whose husband died from AIDS and she had never had any other partners. It transpired that he had been seeing other women. She contracted HIV from her husband before he died and was left needing an incredible amount of support for her and her children. This is not an uncommon occurrence."

Pooja wants all age groups within the Asian community to be targeted with an awareness drive and says it's very important they learn about all the sexually transmitted diseases that are out there. She doesn't want people to live with a false sense of security thinking that it can't happen to them.

"I never thought it would happen to me but it did. If people are in short-term relationships or have casual encounters, they must use condoms which are available free, so there are no excuses.

"Once a couple are ready to commit to each other, they should both have sexual health screening and only then, and with the correct advice, go ahead with having unprotected sex. Many may feel that by doing so, they are saying that they do not trust their partner or get defensive and feel that they are not trusted.

"Anyone who may have had unprotected sex prior to their current partner, must see as their responsibility to have a sexual health screening. I learned the hard way and would not want anyone to go through what I went through and what I am going through now."

**Pooja is not her real name; her name has been changed to protect her identity.*

■ If you are worried about HIV there is free and confidential advice available at your local sexual health clinic. For more information about HIV, log onto www.hivaware.org.uk/becareful/common-myths.php; <http://www.aidsmap.com/Life-goes-on/page/2122720/>; <http://www.worldaids-day.org/>; <http://www.aidsmap.com/resources/>; <http://www.hivaware.org.uk/>; <http://bodyandsoulcharity.org/>; <http://www.tht.org.uk/>

Priya Mulji

Follow Priya Mulji on www.twitter.com/priyamulji or log onto <http://priyamulji.wordpress.com>

Ode to Farhan Akhtar

THE world and its dog know that I am mildly obsessed with Farhan Akhtar. The living legend can direct, sing, act, write, play guitar and make you laugh. With genes from Javed Akhtar and Honey Irani, it's not any wonder he does all of them so well.

On my 30th birthday, I had a tweet from Farhan via @FarOutAkhtar and I was ecstatic. Now I am no stalker, but let's say if Farhan was in front of me, I would be rather excited.

A little about the man – the first major gracing us with his presence was in the form of his directorial debut *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001), which was a modern Indian coming-of-age movie. Since then he has also acted and appeared in a fair few movies, most notably *Rock On* where we heard his lovely voice on the rock-filled soundtrack and more recently on *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, where he played a rather comic character who had a sensitive side to him.

Everything Farhan does seems to come from the heart and let me tell you, there is nothing wrong with sharing your feelings with the world. That is why you should write something like a poem or start a blog. Get friends to read your work and most importantly, stay true to who you are. People might say Kim Kardashian is only known for a sex tape and churning out endless reality shows and clothing lines, but she is a person with a heart who has feelings and expresses herself in a different way to you and I.

There's nothing wrong with having someone to relate to, aspire to and who you can turn to in times of need. This is where my connection to Farhan comes in.

His work always seems to come from the heart, his experiences and a modern way thinking. It's how I feel about my writing too. They say reality TV stars put their whole lives in front of the world to see, but I am doing the same in this column. I write about my feelings, experiences and desires. People like to have someone they can relate to and some of the most touching comments I get from my readers is that they can relate to the subjects I write about.

It might be about chasing your dreams, coping with a broken heart or being alternative, the person you relate to may be Kim Kardashian who lives her life in the public eye, it might be Aamir Khan who is currently at the forefront of bringing the people of India's issues into the public eye via his TV show *Satyamev Jayate* or it might be a friend or a neighbour, but one thing to remember is be true to yourself and follow your heart.

I just wanted to take this column to say Farhan, I salute you and thanks for inspiring me to follow my heart.

