

Shifting From Fixed to *Growth*

The diagnosis does not define you. Your response does. A reframe for every fixed thought that keeps you stuck.

A diagnosis brings fear, shame, and isolation. But how you narrate the experience shapes everything that follows. Drawing on Carol Dweck's work on mindset, this is about moving from a **fixed** story, where herpes limits and defines you, to a **growth** story, where it becomes a doorway to resilience, deeper connection, and self-discovery.

This is not about forcing positivity. It is about changing what you believe is true about who you are and what you can overcome.

Read each fixed thought on the left, then the growth reframe on the right. When one of the left-hand thoughts shows up in your week, this is the answer you reach for.

FROM FIXED TO GROWTH

THE FIXED THOUGHT

No one will want to be in a relationship with me now.

THE GROWTH REFRAME

This situation will help me find someone who values me for who I am, beyond any condition.

I'm damaged goods and less than I was before.

I am more than my diagnosis. This experience adds to my depth and resilience.

My sex life is over.

This challenge will lead me to explore new forms of intimacy and communication, deepening connection.

I can't have a normal life anymore.

Normal can be redefined. I have the power to adapt and create a fulfilling life.

I'm alone in this.

There is a community out there who understands and supports me.

This diagnosis defines me.

I define myself by my actions, beliefs, and values, not by my health status.

I can't handle this.

I have the strength and resources to manage this. Challenges are opportunities for growth.

Telling others will only lead to rejection.

Being open is an act of bravery and integrity. It strengthens the relationships that matter.

People will think less of me if they know.

My worth is not determined by others' opinions. Those who matter will see beyond it.

I have nothing left to offer in a relationship.

I bring qualities and strengths that go far beyond the physical. My experience deepens my empathy.

This will always be a dark cloud over my life.

This can lead to growth, resilience, and a renewed appreciation for health and happiness.

I'll never enjoy intimacy again without fear.

I can navigate intimacy with care and communication, finding new ways to connect.

This makes me less desirable than others.

Desirability comes from character, qualities, and how I treat others, not a medical condition.

Disclosing will always lead to uncomfortable conversations.

Each conversation is a chance to practice courage, honesty, and build trust.

I must keep this secret to keep my social circle.

Sharing selectively strengthens my connections through vulnerability and authenticity.

My condition is a burden to others.

Facing challenges together can strengthen bonds and build mutual understanding.

My life is now on a different path from my peers.

Everyone has unique challenges. This is part of my journey, offering insight and growth.

I'm limited in how I can experience joy now.

I can discover new sources of joy and fulfillment by exploring different parts of myself.

The stigma will overshadow my true self.

I define myself by my actions and values, not by stigma or misconception.

Future happiness is now harder to achieve.

Happiness comes from how I respond to challenges, not the challenges themselves.

I must manage this alone to avoid burdening others.

Sharing my experience builds connection and reminds me I am not alone.

Being intimate means risking too much now.

Intimacy involves risk, but it is also an opportunity for deep connection. It is about balance and open communication.

Love and acceptance are now conditional for me.

True love and acceptance are unconditional. This can filter for genuinely supportive relationships.

My dating life has to be on hold indefinitely.

Dating may look different now, but it is still an avenue for joy and the right connection.

Others' judgment reflects my worth.

Others' judgments reflect their limitations, not my worth. My value comes from within.

I need to lower my standards now.

My diagnosis does not define my worth. I deserve someone who respects and supports me fully.

Overcoming the stigma of herpes is impossible.

Stigma is a societal construct I can challenge by living openly and educating others.

No one is hopeless and no one is helpless.