



Amazing Race

...where cancer and HIV are mere hurdles

January 1, 2004 By Josh Sparber

Who: Richard Brodsky
what: runs the Marathon
where: New York City
When: 11.02.03

A year before lacing up for last November's run, HIVer and architect-turned-author Richard Brodsky, 51, collapsed at his book signing. An avid marathon man, he seemed to have hit a wall: a cancerous brain tumor, unrelated to HIV. POZ caught up with Brodsky back at the starting line to see if he could bring home the gold.

I'd run marathons annually since 1992, so I was ecstatic to be returning after my seizure. I'd run my fastest one while positive in '98, but now I had a bad shoulder break from the seizure. I knew that physically this would be my hardest race ever. But I *had* to finish, to prove that HIVers can lead healthy, productive lives.

Finding out I was HIV positive was the worst day of my life. I had to tell my wife, Jodi, that I was unfaithful, bisexual and positive. She never wavered in her decision to stick by me—we love each other, we have three children and we run marathons together (at our own pace). She's also helped with my treatment. My cancer is more serious than my HIV—surgery and radiation have rid 95 percent of the tumor, although some cancer cells remain in my brain. Running is therapeutic, too—it eases my headaches. Luckily, I've been able to promote my first book [*Jodi, The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*] and work on my second.

About 18 miles into the marathon, I asked myself, "Why am I doing this?" My shoulder went numb and my legs felt as if they had nothing left. My brain had to tell my body, "I don't care how much pain you are experiencing, your job is to finish." Then my oncologist, Casilda Balmaceda, joined me for the last mile and a half. I got a spurt of energy near the finish line, where people called out my name on my shirt and I was able to sprint past most of the runners. My time: 4:52. I felt like an Olympic athlete.

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