Lips Unsealed

July 1, 2011 By Willette Francis

Given the stigma and discrimination often faced by HIV-positive people, disclosing your positive status can be daunting. In her POZ Blog entry "My First Disclosure" (March 19), our anonymous blogger shared what it was like to tell a potential romantic partner that she's living with HIV. Overwhelming responses poured in as you shared your experiences and offered words of comfort. Your collective commentary offers excellent advice for anyone facing the challenges of telling a partner your status.

I think it was right to be honest like you were. Sadly, there are still a lot of people who don't know enough about HIV/AIDS to know that people can still have a fulfilling relationship with someone who is HIV positive. I am HIV negative, but as long as the man was truthful with me from the very start I would have no problem falling in love with and staying with someone who is positive. Don't worry, my friend, you will find someone who will love you unconditionally.**—Donald Whoolery, Bedford Heights, Ohio**

This is among the harshest aspects of HIV: finding a partner who will love you–HIV and all. It is an enormous burden on a partner, not knowing if/when/how their loved one will get sick and possibly die. If someone isn't up to it, they generally know inside. My advice is to get the HIV business out up-front; preferably it should be the second or third thing you tell someone who's interested in you. That way you can screen out those who aren't ready and you can love someone who is. In the meantime, stay strong and reach out to those who care about you, and always believe there is someone out there who is right for you.**—Mark Janes, Guerneville, California**

Stay strong. There will be doors slammed in your face. There will be men who freak out over the fact that they kissed you or shared utensils. There will be accusations, paranoia and gossip. Anyone who says that HIV doesn't get in the way of their love life is either lying, chaste or in denial. Yours is not an easy path to walk. Remember what you bring to the table.**—Andrew, Cleveland, Ohio**

I can totally relate to what you've said. So many of us have the same experience. I choose not to limit myself to dating only positive men. I just stay positive in my outlook on life and hope to meet someone who will love me regardless of my status. You stay strong and remember: You're not alone.**—Angie50, City and State Withheld**

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