Back to Life, Back to Reality: Roy Mead

April 1, 1999 By Angelo Ragaza

The New York Times *calls it a "unique affliction," a trauma matched only by death-camp survival. But for us, Lazarus Syndrome, named after the biblical figure Christ restored to the living, is just the price we have to pay for life in the protease era.* POZ *spoke with five PWAs about the long march back from death's door.*

Age 46
Home Atlanta
Occupation Retired from U.S. Forest Service
Tested Positive 1984

The Dying Game
I was told I was going to die so many times that I gave away everything I owned. I ran up a credit card debt, I sold two life insurance policies, I went to 34 countries in 12 months. I was stressed out and pissed off when protease inhibitors came out because I had finally accepted that I was going to die, and I had planned for it. And then my life came back to me. I call it the boomerang effect. Your life is gone, and then it's back.

The Way He Lives Now
I'm now living in a small apartment on social security plus my civil service pension, and my income is one-fifth of what it was before. I eat at home, I don't go on any trips.

When I go to my friend's house, I see a torchiere lamp that used to be in my house. Another friend of mine has a baby who's crawling now, and I gave them my rug for their family.

Another major difference: I have a lover, something really new. I never even dated before. For years I just tricked, because I certainly wasn't going to ask anyone to make a commitment knowing I was going to get sick and die.

Let's Talk About Sex
I've always been scared to death of giving HIV to anyone. My partner is negative, and we talked in bed before we got intimate. I said it won't hurt my feelings if he'd rather not have sex. No expectations. So the first time, we lay beside each other and masturbated. Today, my viral load is undetectable, but we haven't changed the way we have sex. We practice very safe sex—I have never penetrated him because of my fear.

Step by 12 Step

First I got sick. Then I got sober. Then I learned how to take care of myself. A lot of my friends I've stopped calling because they were drinking and using. This man is like nobody I've ever dated—honest, genuine. I've learned to trust him. I guess you could say I'm growing up.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Back-to-Life-Back-to-Reality-Roy-Mead-9561-5629