Comfort Zone

February 1, 2001

When HIVers hear the phrase *cocktail hour,* we reach for our frosty glasses of vodka with little paper parasols. If only! Starting a new drug cocktail can be depressing as hell -- the number and size of the pills, the strict adherence schedule, rules about eating (or not), seemingly inevitable side effects. So, before starting my latest cocktail, I constructed a shrine to bless my meds, surround them with positive energy and convince myself that I could tolerate them and that they would keep me alive. I gathered objects precious to me -- gargoyles, crystals, a sand dollar I'd found with a lover who died of AIDS, tiny Buddha statues from a kind neighbor and, of course, plenty of candles. Each evening I lit the candles and read the labels: "Take six pills twice a day. Take three pills at bedtime...." It took almost two weeks before I could even begin downing the drugs. Now, four months later, my viral load is down and my T cells are up. Was it the Buddha? The boyfriend? All I know is that I am grateful I'm still alive.

--Garrett Paulus

Mountain View, California

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Comfort-Zone-1111-9057