



# Jennifer Blackard

July 12, 2013

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Reedsburg, Wisconsin  
Positive since 2002

I have two kids—they are both negative. I tell people that when they find out I am positive. I have finally accepted HIV, and though it is not who I am, it has helped with who I have become. I have had trying times in my life, but I still consider myself lucky, because it could have been worse.

Some people wish they could go back in their life and change things. I think about that all the time, but if I had a chance, I wouldn't know where to begin. And if I did go back to change things, I wouldn't have my kids.

I had a good life growing up in Illinois. I am a twin but we don't look alike. I also have a younger sister and a younger brother. I didn't have any boyfriends or play around with boys because I was too shy. Of course, I had my crushes!

After high school graduation my parents decided to move to Wisconsin and since I didn't know where else to go, I moved with them. I got a job and my sister and I moved in with each other. I made new friends and met some guys through them.

I had my first kiss from my first boyfriend and thought I was in love. After six months, we moved in together and I slept with him for the first time on his birthday. We used a condom, because I wasn't ready to have a baby. After two months of sleeping together we decided to marry—he never asked, we just decided. I was 19 and he was 25.

A couple months later I took a home pregnancy test and found out I was pregnant. A week later my boyfriend hit me. I left him that day and he went to stay with a friend. He was an illegal Mexican and was deported soon afterwards. I knew this about him, but I loved him anyway, or so I thought.

When I went to the doctor's office to confirm I was pregnant, they did the usual blood work. Two weeks later, I was called back to the doctor's office, and was told I was indeed pregnant and that I also had HIV. That was on March 9, 2002.

What three adjectives best describe you?

I am a great listener. People call me sassy but I consider myself shy until I know someone. I consider myself a great people person and want to help others.

What is your greatest achievement?

My greatest achievement is that I have accepted that I have HIV but I do not let it control my life.

What is your greatest regret?

Not knowing more about STDs and sex growing up

What keeps you up at night?

Worrying about my kids' future and also how to tell them about my status

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

The side effects of the medications

What is the best advice you ever received?

Live one day at a time

What drives you to do what you do?

My kids

What is your motto?

Live for everything; die for nothing

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?

My kids

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

A wild horse, because I wouldn't belong to anyone and I could go wherever I want.

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