Mailbox

The November 1999 issue—the “new POZ”—certainly got your attention, and this expanded Mailbox features only a sample of your reactions to the bold redesign and brash cover story. You’re an opinionated, outspoken bunch, but with a sigh of relief we can report that you like the new look, you really like it—at least two out of three do. Keep the opinions coming.

January 1, 2000

Take a Good Look

“We’re all over AIDS.” You make me feel that we’re back in the game.

Michael Aldridge
Laguna Beach, California

The *POZ* design wasn’t broke, but in deciding to fix it, did you have to make it harder to read? The worst example is the most important article in the November 1999 issue: The first page of “How to End the Epidemic” is almost unreadable. Black type on green grass, white type on clouds.... Don’t you like us anymore? Nearly as hard to decipher was Stephen Gendin’s white-on-black side of the story, ditto the profile on Flor Monterossa. And your facile tagline—“We’re all over AIDS”—is an amazingly unfortunate double entendre. The rest of the redesign is merely ugly. Should I tell you how I *really* feel?

Chris Quilter
Laguna Beach, California

I like the new look of *POZ*. I especially appreciate the “Bad Faith” and “Supreme Sacrifice” columns, and your suggestions for contacting the proper politicians to let them know our feelings.

Two slight quarrels: One, the “How to End the Epidemic” opener was very hard to read. Please remember that some of us have vision problems. And, please, no more Stephen Gendin. It’s unfortunate that his lover got infected with an untreatable strain of HIV, but the article points to two sexually selfish and stupid men who are guided by their dicks rather than their brains. In almost every article by Gendin, he whines about his sex life. Some of us feel very fortunate just to be alive.

Charles Moore
Evanston, Illinois

Now, Both Sides

"Both Sides Now" is exactly the kind of bold story I expect from *POZ* (November 1999). It's sad, sick, poignant, highly erotic and a vivid emotional portrait of our big, queer life drama. Sadly, I could relate; it resonated profoundly. The authors' remarkable emotional honesty is breathtaking and rewarding for those looking to understand how seroconversions happen over and over and over.

Tom Ellicott
Atlanta

OK, let me get this straight: Stephen Gendin, president of Community Prescription Service and *POZ* contributing editor, has infected an individual while knowing he's been positive for years? Gendin should start reading his own magazine. He is an insult to every positive man out there, and this story was an insult to all of us responsible guys. Therapy? Gendin needs a jail cell!

POZ is really starting to rack them up like the *National Enquirer*. I'm beginning to think that your magazine is doing a lot of damage to people with AIDS. Let's hope that one of those right-wing senators doesn't bring this issue onto the Senate floor when it comes time for more money for AIDS research.

If anyone hasn't told Gendin lately, let me be the one: When you infect someone knowingly, it's called murder. Next time why not just shoot the poor bastard? It would be less painful.

Ted Pecora
New York City

I'm in the middle of "Both Sides Now," and I'm ready to cry with relief and fear at the same time. As a woman who has been living with AIDS for years and who's had many relationships with HIV negative men, I've often struggled with the emotional side of why it is so difficult to be consistent with safe sex. I'm married to a wonderful HIV negative man, and so many aspects of this article hit home.

I want to thank Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell for having the balls to write about their story and for their ability to tell it so well. The asinine things that people—even those with HIV—have said when I've tried to reach out for help with the difficult problem of consistently practicing safe sex are not to be believed. It's nice to know that I am not alone in this.

Please keep my husband in your prayers. I want him to be spared the nightmare of living with this Godforsaken virus.

N. Ciccone
New York City

As one of your readers who didn't feel that *POZ*'s earlier barebacking discussion went deep

enough, I found “Both Sides Now” complicated, sad and brilliant. That the thoughts and feelings behind barebacking don’t add up to some neat lesson is, of course, the lesson. This was one of the most honest and painful pieces I have read about relationships in a long time, or probably ever. I hope that Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell appreciate—and are appreciated for—how extraordinary they are in getting beyond slogans to self-reflection.

Daniel Wolfe
New York City

I just read the articles by Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell, and I want to puke. The conclusion that these are two sick fucks has nothing to do with their serostatus. Will you please spare us any further exposure to your contributing editor?

Jay Bradshaw
Sherman Oaks, California

Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell’s articles were outstanding. It took a great deal of courage for them to share so honestly. We need more of this kind of honesty in publications and in our sexual relationships. Some may jump to judgment and condemnation, but that accomplishes nothing. Gendin and McDowell reflect what is a serious challenge for most gay men, since sex is very personal, complicated and difficult. Their pain and needs speak to my heart very deeply, as I have had similar struggles. Their honesty gives me hope and strength to confront my own sexuality issues.

Even an old guy of 57 like me doesn’t have it all figured out yet. I wish I could give them both a big hug. Thank you for the fabulous article.

Edward J. Shields
Seattle

I strongly feel that Stephen Gendin killed his lover, Kyle McDowell—all for just a piece of ass. Barebacking should be outlawed and people like Gendin should be jailed for murder. Nor is McDowell blameless—I would never sleep with a man until we had The Talk. I’ve been to the resort in Tennessee where they met, and I know that free condoms are placed in every room. All that Gendin stood for and worked toward was destroyed by his lack of concern for safety of another person.

God help you, Stephen, for what you did to a person you proclaim to love. Please, never love me if that’s what you call love.

H. Austin Flannery
St. Petersburg, Florida

Bravo! The new format of *POZ* is wonderful. The cover was so appealing that I had to read “Both Sides Now” first. That article was like a mirror for what I’ve been debating for years. I’m in a serodiscordant relationship and understand the need for “uncovered” intimacy, but I put my desire to keep my husband seronegative above any desire for a moment of unprotected—and

false—intimacy. The intimacy we experience is in holding each other and just being able to love and care for one another. For us, that is enough.

However, neither my husband nor I are perfect, nor am I in any way judging Stephen Gendin or Kyle McDowell. I just think it all comes down to what people have in their hearts for their other halves. If you need to take that kind of chance with the other person in your life, maybe it is only sex that is the objective.

James A. Gage Jr.
Beaumont, Texas

I found your cover story on *POZ* bankroller Stephen Gendin and his "lover," Kyle McDowell, deeply disturbing on several levels. The first has to do with how the rich and the poor are treated differently in this epidemic. Last year, when a poor man in the midwest injected his son with HIV-infected blood, he was arrested, tried and jailed. When rich man Gendin injects McDowell with HIV supervirus–infected semen, he gets a full-cover national underwear spread.

The second disturbing fact has to do with these men's false claims of love. If you love someone, you don't knowingly and willingly place him or her in mortal danger. The very least these two could do is admit that barebacking is not an expression of love or self-love.

Finally, I wonder who is going to bear the financial burden of Gendin's selfish, hateful act? There's no mention of how he is setting aside a portion of the wealth he's accumulated through selling HIV drugs to pay for McDowell's medical care, housing and other needs. What we'll get is endless *POZ* articles about how the taxpayers of this country aren't spending enough to clean up the mess that Gendin made. He should be jailed in a place where he can't kill anyone else, and his assets should be seized to pay for McDowell's future care.

Tom Hartman
Chicago

Both Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell should be applauded for their bravery, if not their lethal mistakes. "Both Sides Now" is the kind of story I wish we'd see more of—what real people are really doing—Thought Police be damned. Sex is so maddeningly complicated that saying "just wear a rubber" just doesn't work. But why is it that so many of us feel compelled to equate intimacy with barebacking? Somehow, I think true intimacy has nothing to do with latex or the lack thereof.

Jim Pickett
Via the Internet

After reading the article by Kyle McDowell about his relationship with Stephen Gendin, I couldn't help but think about the measures people will go to for love—unfortunately, more often than not, at a price that would shatter the Mona Lisa. Instead of counting [Donna] Shalala Infections, maybe you should start counting Gendin Infections. Love is often blind, but life is priceless.

R. Russell Marra

New York City

The “Both Sides Now” articles are a service to us all. Such candor is courageous and deserves respect, even if some of the dynamics that Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell revealed might not. Such dynamics arise from the shadow sides of the psyche, and should give us all pause because we share them. We should be humbly searching our own darker impulses, not rushing to judge others.

Thanks also to Dr. Robert Remien (“Couples Counseling,” November 1999). His advice is as sound as can be found. Here’s hoping it appears on walls wherever we gather.

Stan Matek
Chicago

Both Stephen Gendin and Kyle “Hush” McDowell should have their cocks cut off before they infect any more men. Gendin is not an educator—he’s an AIDS terrorist—and *POZ* should not be giving him a single inch to spread his particular brand of ignorance. And “Hush” should do just that—his psychobabble does not impress me. As they sing in the Toyota commercial: “You asked for it, you got it!”

J.F. Bernecker
Homestead, Florida

Thank you for the articles on Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell’s struggles with seroconversion. It has been a very difficult issue for me to face over the years. HIV brings a whole new complexity to the issue of intimacy in my life, in ways I never imagined.

Recently I met someone who is also positive and thought, “Great, no real need to use condoms, right?” Then he told me that he is resistant to the same meds that seem to be working well for me. I was confronted with the dilemma of how safe to play, and was left wondering how high my self-esteem really is. I was constantly thinking, “Should I worry? Should he worry?”—it took all the spontaneity out of the moment. This was tough enough, but nowhere near the mind-bending conflict of being with someone who is negative.

Today, I struggle between building self-respect and a tenacious sex drive that can be an outlet for all kinds of power plays. It made a big difference to see a frank discussion in a magazine that has helped me to know myself better. A lot of us out here are confronting the same issues, often in much less supportive environments than New York. Keep it going—let’s stop pretending that it’s all so simple when it simply is not.

Brian Fordyce
San Luis Obispo, California

As a long-term HIV survivor, I read “Both Sides Now” with mounting horror. I applaud you for publishing this account, for it graphically highlights critical issues and forces readers to think about them.

I vigorously support Kyle McDowell's right to commit suicide by the means of his choice, though he certainly selected a really ugly way. On the other hand, I vigorously disagree with Stephen Gendin's between-the-lines argument that it is his right to kill as many men as possible in his pursuit of sexual pleasure. His callous disregard of the safety of others is appalling, and has made me reconsider my longtime opposition to capital punishment. We do not have room in our society for serial killers, so why are we giving this man testosterone so that he can kill more of us?

Louis Bryan
San Francisco

"Both Sides Now" made me angry because Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell are obviously in love; how else could they have done this article together with such caring, mutual respect and sincerity? But, since they haven't forgiven each other, or themselves, this is what they need to do: Take separate flights back to Tennessee, where it all started, and let the passions fly. Only at that moment will all be forgiven. This may seem expensive and corny, but now that they know everything there is to know about each other, they need to go back and meet for the first time, again.

Neal Allard
Dracut, Massachusetts

Sending Out an S.O.S.

I've been a subscriber since your second year of publication, and read every issue with great interest. I particularly enjoyed Editor in Chief Walter Armstrong's poignant editorial in the November 1999 issue. One haunting question: What happened to Sean Strub? Was my head buried in the sand since I didn't notice the change of editorship? I always read his articles with interest and follow his lab studies from month to month. Please let me know if his health is failing so that I can add him to my prayer list.

George M.
Via the Internet

Sean Strub replies: *I'm fine, thank you, just taking a bit of an editorial breather. From time to time I'll still write my column—there's an S.O.S. on page 37—and provide blood (and other) offerings for examination in Lab Blab (formerly known as What This Means).*

Walter Armstong's editor's letter is a beautiful tribute to his friend Rand Snyder, and to many who have gone before us who knew how to live up to and including the last minute of their lives. Thanks for the beauty and hope that still comes our way, frequently through your relentless, excellent reporting.

Roy Sather
Phoenix

My Better Half

Congratulations on a great new look. Nestled on page 34 in the Planet section was a photo of a glass of water with the unassuming headline: “Life is better with HIV, say 49% of positive folks.” Is that not worthy of a larger story? I often tell people that being positive is the greatest blessing of my life. Their disbelief never surprises me, so I explain how it has completely changed my attitude about living. I am thrilled that 49 percent of my fellow pozers agree. Years ago, I began calling it *H-Oi-Vey*.

Bill Kavanagh
Los Angeles

Hydroxy Moxie

I read your warning about hydroxyurea (HU), and wanted to share my experience with it, which caused side effects not mentioned in your piece (“Cry Me a Liver,” November 1999). I took HU as salvage therapy for four months. It killed off many white blood cells. I went off HU and all antiretrovirals three months ago, and my white-blood-cell counts continue to plummet, despite biweekly leukine infusions. I had read that white-blood-cell suppression was supposed to reverse once you stop the HU, but I’m one case in which this theory hasn’t proven true. As with AIDS treatments in general, we are the guinea pigs and keep learning as time goes on.

Robert K. Klepper
Pensacola, Florida

Benefit of the Doubt

Kudos for including Celia Farber’s op-ed media piece in your November 1999 issue (“Future Shock”). If you truly want to be “all over AIDS,” you will be more inclusive of voices like hers. I’ve been following Farber’s articles in other publications for years.

Due to the openness and conviction of such HIV-reappraisal advocates, an entire generation has developed a healthy skepticism for AIDS orthodoxy and the “mysteries” of HIV. In a variety of ways, we choose to live outside the historic AIDS paradigm, while working to correct a system that has exchanged science for faith. We are living long, healthy lives and, yes, we also read *POZ*.

Karl Olson
Via the Internet

They Dig Doug

Doug Ireland’s “Bad Faith” gave me the jitters (November 1999). What is becoming of this country? Do we really need laws such as the Religious Liberty Protection Act? Not only will it ruin what little we have gained, but it will affect lots of people, not just those with HIV. I plan on contacting my representatives in DC.

Jorge L. Rodriguez
Via the Internet

Kudos to Doug Ireland for the update on the controversy surrounding the development of less expensive, generic drugs by some Third World countries and the hostile reaction from the Clinton/Gore camp ("Veep Show," October 1999). Ireland notes the tortured and disingenuous defense of the vice president's team to criticism that Gore is shilling for U.S. pharmaceutical firms at the potential cost of millions of African and Asian lives. I'm curious as to whether his policy would be in contrast to that offered by any of the Republican candidates or to Bill Bradley, Gore's chief rival for his party's nomination.

Edward Martone
Newark, New Jersey

Bad B-havior

In "A Vicious Cycle" (October 1999), Lark Lands didn't mention what the "B" in "Plan B" stands for. I propose that it stand for "bad." I'd think that the cyclic therapy mentioned in the article would only serve to hasten multidrug-resistant HIV strains, not prevent them.

Michael Lochrie
Louisville, Colorado

***Correction**: The Wide Time Productions phone number was listed incorrectly in the October 1999 Picks. You can reach them at 201.864.5366.*

He's So Randy

Stephen Gendin is the stereotype of exactly the man most people want to avoid: The selfish type that doesn't communicate. He is very lucky that I am not his boyfriend. I'd be looking for a judge to sue him in a civil suit for felonious assault with intent. How his ex can even look at him is beyond me.

Randy Sindelar Corturillo
Cleveland

MIXED-STATUS, SEX & RISK: A LIVE CHAT

As our overflowing Mailbox shows, November's cover story, "Both Sides Now," struck a nerve with readers. Whether you applauded or were appalled by Stephen Gendin and Kyle McDowell for publicizing their account of how one infected the other with the HIV supervirus, it's clear that many of you are wrestling with
similar issues in your own relationships.

POZ ran the story not only as a kind of cautionary tale but to provoke a community-wide discussion that is, as these passionate, painful letters illustrate, much needed. Let's keep the talk

alive.

To get a load off your chest or give us a piece of your mind, join Stephen Gendin, Kyle McDowell and experts in multidrug-resistant virus and other issues that mixed-status couples face for an **Internet roundtable copresented by POZ and WebMD on Wednesday, January 19, 2000 @ 10 pm, EST (7 pm, PST).**

To get your questions answered during this live interactive forum, please point your browser to http://live.webmd.com.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Mailbox-10582-4075