On His Toes

Jaime Martinez two-steps with stress

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A master of stress management, Jaime Martinez recommends a steady diet of positive thinking, modern dance and sex. “Stress is something your brain channels into a positive or negative reaction. It’s always gonna be a negative situation to begin with,” says the dancer, a founding member of Manhattan’s Parsons Company. “But there are ways to turn it around to make it positive.”

It is this balancing act between positive and negative anxieties that keeps Martinez on his toes. “Usually, performing is all positive stress,” he says. “You learn to relax into things so you can make the audience believe something -- like you’re having a good time, and you’re smiling like it isn’t the thousandth time you’ve danced the dance.”

Martinez admits his HIV diagnosis six years ago was not as easy. “When you get your diagnosis, it is cataclysmic stress -- world-ending, mind-shattering. And you deal with it. At first, you’re completely in shock, numb to it. Everything in your life becomes HIV-related. That in itself keeps you up at night.”

Martinez no longer loses sleep over HIV. Through dance and exercise, meditation, a strict treatment regimen and sex (“Masturbation is fantastic!”), he has relegated the disease to a minor chorus role in his life: “In dealing with my HIV, I’ve gotten to a point where even though I’m taking lots of medication, weeks will go by when I won’t give HIV a second thought. It’s become something like taking a shower every day -- it’s just something you do. It’s just living life on life’s terms.”

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