The Real Deal

So you’re great at dating. What happens when you’re ready for mating? Here’s a map to getting to forever.

February 1, 2005

Serodiverse love is a threesome

Many HIVers aren’t prepared for the ongoing negotiation involved in loving a neggie—which doesn’t just mean safe sex. “Negative people, for example, are sometimes afraid their partners will get sick and die,” says LA HIVer and therapist Ken Howard, himself half of a mixed-status couple. Communication and couples therapy can ease the imbalance.

Same-status love ain’t always easier

Dating another HIVer can be a source of friction as well as support, especially if partners face different needs. “One of you may be struggling with lipo and the other isn’t,” Howard says. Talk about your medical differences—and make sure you both get the care you need.

Beware the green-eyed monster

Jealousy can be a killer, especially if you don’t have clear rules about monogamy, as in some gay relationships. Don’t rule out any options before you’ve considered them seriously, and talk honestly and respectfully about what feels safe for each of you.

Don’t settle

“Unfortunately,” says SisterLove Inc. counselor Lisa Diane White, “some people with HIV stay in relationships because they’re afraid that no one else will want them.” Don’t let your virus call the relationship shots. “I ask my clients, ‘Is your love 100 percent healthy?’ If they can’t answer ‘100 percent,’ they have to figure out what’s going on.”

Watch the sex

No, we don’t (only) mean rent porn. Sex is often a barometer of what’s happening emotionally. So if things are no longer rockin’ in the bedroom, ask each other if it’s time to spice it up or if you’re erecting barriers to other kinds of intimacy.

Sacrifice and compromise

All couples compromise to make a relationship work, and that’s even more true for couples with HIV, who may face extra challenges. Commit to solving your problems together, even if it means sacrificing something you allowed yourself when single. Meeting halfway is a surefire solution.

Be true to you
One pitfall of being madly in love is that you and your soulmate can become too intertwined. “You’re not the glue sisters,” says HIVer and therapist Michael Shernoff. “Differences make things sizzle”—and melding into one entity can dim that fire. Try to always keep one foot firmly planted in your own life.

Let out your frustrations
Author of the gay-relationship classic Permanent Partners, therapist Betty Berzon advises long-termers to “express dissatisfaction—don’t just stew in it.” Another of her mantras? “Don’t flee from conflict.” Take a cue from New York City HIVer Mark Milano, who checks in regularly with his partner “to make sure resentments aren’t building up.”

Say thanks
The flip side of letting your better half know what’s not working is acknowledging what is. “We all need that,” says Berzon. Affection can be physical and mental. Apply generous doses of both!

Expect change
“The biggest complaint I hear from couples,” says Shernoff, “is ‘It’s changed!’ I say, ‘That’s fabulous. You don’t want a mummy.’” Be ready for change so that when it comes, you can learn rather than run from it.

Remember your first date
Whether you met cruising on a sex site or squeezing melons at the grocery, years of routine can make you forget why you got together in the first place. “Remember how you were once fascinated by this person telling you new things that excited you,” Howard says. “It’s there, even in long-term relationships.”

How they do it

Together 1 year
Eddie Lopez, 38
Ricardo Canales, 27
LOCATION: Bronx, NY
STAR SIGNS: Aries; Taurus
THEY MET: On Eddie’s visit to Puerto Rico, where local Ricardo had a drug problem. “I helped get him into rehab here,” says Eddie. “The rest is history.”
ANNOYANCES: Eddie: “He’s a perfectionist and reprimands me a lot.” Ricardo: “Well, he’s always dropping things!”
IT WORKS BECAUSE: “We trust each other,” they say. “We talk. And we can joke about things.”
ADVICE TO OTHERS: “Don’t have secrets or taboo topics,” says Eddie. “Be able to talk about anything,” echoes Ricardo.
THE HIV CONNECTION: Brings them closer. If one is sick, the other takes care of him.

Together 2 years

Grove Lawlis, 55
Nate Klarfeld, 54
LOCATION: Wilton Manors, FL
STAR SIGNS: Cancer; Virgo
THEY MET: When Texan Grove saw Floridian Nate's ad in POZ's 2003 Valentine's personals. Grove had been complaining that "there were no decent men to date over 50 in Texas!" says Nate. Grove first visited Nate in April and moved there in July.
ANNOYANCES: Grove: "Nate interrupts me when I'm speaking to someone." Nate: "Grove gets so into his reading he doesn't know I'm there."
IT WORKS BECAUSE: "We talk and talk and talk." (Grove was a shrink.)
ADVICE TO OTHERS: "First, you have to be compatible—then flexible." (Read the column they cowrite at www.ourindependent.com.)
THE HIV CONNECTION: "If we weren't both positive, we'd never have met through POZ!"

Together 3 years
Alvin Freeman, 45
Lynn Kidd-Freeman, 44
LOCATION: Columbus, OH
STAR SIGNS: Capricorn; Pisces
THEY MET: At a statewide AIDS powwow in 2001. "I saw Lynn from across the room and knew that I wanted to marry her," says Alvin. He e-mailed her a few days later. They married in September 2002.
ANNOYANCES: "He's quiet," says Lynn, "and I'm inquisitive." Meaning nosy? "Yes," laughs Alvin.
IT WORKS BECAUSE: They talk things through. "Once I brew over an issue, that is," says Alvin.
ADVICE TO OTHERS: Learn each other's boundaries.
THE HIV CONNECTION: "We support each other about seeing the doctor and taking our meds."

My Ideal LTR IS…

LOVER MATERIAL
Orlando, FL | 43 | MSM
Fun and loving—two masculine forces bouncing off of each other to make the most of life. I know there's someone out there for me.

POSITIVELY SWEET
Philadelphia, PA | 49 | WSM
Built on honesty and trust, faith and commitment, passion and level-headedness—and a great sense of humor! I'm spirit-led and seeking lifetime commitment.

COOLBOAT 19
Fort Lee, VA | 32 | MSW
Based on compromise. Me being there for you and you for me. I love to go out but enjoy cuddling with my sig. other and watching a movie even more.

MEXICAN MAGIC
Garden Grove, CA | 32 | MSW
Where we get married, have a child and make a successful family. I’m in great health and great shape and want to share a life of dreams with you.

POZZIE LOVER
Atlanta, GA | 52 | MSM
One with physical and emotional intimacy, scintillating convos, hand-holding, gourmet dinners by candlelight, exposing our vulnerabilities and passionate kissing.

JUST FABULOUS
Chicago, IL | 42 | WSM
A bond with a man who’s strong but humble, open-minded, honest, God-fearing and life-loving…like me, but taller! Together, we go to basketball games and for walks on the beach.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/The-Real-Deal-2752-1468