Where’s the Party?

On Ann Silver’s first anniversary with HIV, the gifts and life lessons arrive late.

May 1, 2007 By Ann Silver

At exactly 7:48 this morning, I marked the one-year anniversary of my being diagnosed HIV positive. As the day approached, I’d thought about it a lot. Would the milestone bring some great epiphany? Would all that has happened this past year finally make sense? Would I look different, wake up with a glow of enlightenment, come to a grand realization about my place in this world as a 43-year-old, heterosexual, HIV positive, single woman?

Having disclosed to all my close friends and a few family members, I was sure I’d get some acknowledgment. So I dressed for the occasion. Oh, yes, I got all cute: put on my favorite skirt and boots, did my hair, paid extra attention to my makeup. I vowed that when the big insights—and the cards, flowers, gifts and phone calls—arrived, I would look good.

But none did. No roses. No insights. While at work, every time I went into the bathroom, I’d look into the mirror, try-ing to see something different about me. Did I look calmer, wiser, more HIV-like? But I soon realized that I looked just the same as I had the day before, only cuter.

As the day progressed, I attempted to reflect on this past year, on all that had happened—everything from breaking up with my loser boyfriend, moving into a new place and yes, finding out I had contracted HIV. Finally, once I was home alone on my couch this evening, the big epiphany did arrive: Not all of the year, or even most of it, was about HIV.

First, the good stuff: My Mom turned 80, and we threw a kick-ass party. My best friend graduated from college at 42. Another kick-ass party. I had the honor of performing the wedding ceremony of a good friend of mine (my hometown of San Diego will commission you for the day to perform a marriage), which was a nice distraction from my virus.

The not-so-good stuff: I lost my job three months after being diagnosed, but that had nothing to do with my status. I got a new one a month later, only to be terminated, and I can’t say that was due to my status, either. I was without a job for three months. The electricity, cable, phone and Internet hookup were shut off. I lost my car insurance, bill collectors hounded me, and I was poor as hell. But I got a new job this month, one I really wanted, and I await my first paycheck.

Most of this year’s challenges would likely have happened with or without HIV. The virus just made

them more convoluted. I’m not saying HIV is something to be dismissed or downplayed. And I realize how fortunate I am compared to many people living with AIDS. My lab numbers are good and I am not on any medications. I know the virus certainly adds to the drama of everyday life. Yet, as I’m finally accepting tonight, my life has always been filled with drama.

Over the past year, albeit only to myself, I have blamed HIV for every intense emotion, bad experience and shitty attitude I’ve had. I’ve been rude and snappy, intolerant and pushy, and I have managed to alienate a lot of my friends, using the virus as an excuse. I could just as easily blame my vices on another chronic illness: I’ve been an insulin-dependent diabetic since I was 14.

But like diabetes, HIV is something I have, not something that controls what happens around me. Life goes on, bad things will happen, celebrations will occur and there will be moments of pure joy, all of which will be totally unrelated to my HIV status.

Meanwhile, if and when HIV does bring its own drama, I, the drama queen, will be well prepared. Or at least well dressed. Happy anniversary to me.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Where-8217-s-the-Party-11679-5493