Not Alone

In a blog post titled "Coming Out Again, but This Time as Nonbinary," POZ blogger Richard JMV shares yet another milestone in their journey living with HIV. Below is an edited excerpt.

June 27, 2022 By Richard JMV

Having a blog has been quite a healing and refreshing outlet in my life. Since I first posted in March 2018, I have shared my journey of getting sober, focusing on my entertainment and nightlife career, dating, and learning to thrive with HIV. But over the past year, I've posted much less. I found myself distracted, lazy, confused and unsure about the next step for my life. It seemed the world was opening up after COVID-19 and then shutting down again after the emergence of another variant. It has put a mental strain on all of us. I wasn't sure what I should write about because my life and career seemed to be fluctuating, but then I realized there is an entirely new chapter to my story that I want to share.

During lockdown, I discovered that there was something about being a cisgender gay man that always felt like a cover for my true identity as a nonbinary person. The more I heard discussions from others who are nonbinary and trans, the more I sat and thought about my gender identity. It was an epiphany, to say the least.

It was also as if I'd thrown a brick into my life and shattered everything I learned. There were over 30 years of what I knew as a gay man that I had to reflect on. Taking time to process my thoughts was critical to get to where I am now. I feel more comfortable using they/them pronouns and speaking up.

Some of my first thoughts were scary. Will people accept me? Will I accept myself? Will people still find me attractive? Will people adjust to me and respect me? How will I respond when faced with ignorance? It feels a little like going to a new school or starting a new job—I just have to show up as myself, knowing that not everyone will get it at first, but they'll learn to respect me.

I started this blog to tell my story up until about 2018. My last blog entry, from October 2021, "How I Turned Halloween Into My Own Season of HIV Awareness," was about how I was getting ready to tell my story publicly in the fall of 2017, which led to my blog on POZ.com. That period

was a turning point in my development, growth and acceptance of my own status.

Throughout the process of writing my story, I heard from many people. Several wrote comments or slid into my direct messages on Instagram or Facebook. It was kind of cool to think that I was creating this safe space for people to reach out and tell me their stories. When my followers would approach me in real life, it would usually get emotional.

It still happens and reminds me that telling our stories isn't about us but about how others can relate. Telling our stories authentically makes us feel both vulnerable and powerful, and it creates community and a sense of belonging—I'm not alone.

Now, I'm ready to tell you about the next part of my life while occasionally sharing stories and thoughts from the past. This road has been quite emotional, quite tricky and dramatic, but it has also allowed me room to change. It has been an opportunity to look at myself and learn to grow beyond my ego and controlling nature. The next period brought immense loss in various forms too. I guess it was just life on life's terms and how I navigated it, grieving and growing while looking for the beautifully satisfying moments.

Richard JMVCourtesy of Richard JMV

I hope you'll join me on this journey too. I'll attempt to post more often for my faithful readers, and I'm looking forward to reading about your experiences as well—your support keeps me doing what

I’m doing.

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