Bradley Fowler

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Canton, MI
Positive since 2012

The moment I tested positive for HIV, I began implementing positive ideas to help me overcome the hurdles that lay ahead. As a result, I attained my HIV counseling and peer educator certification through the Michigan Department of Community Health, and I began reaching out for resources that could provide me with tools to better understand how to continue living my life.

Although there have been many moments since testing positive when I felt incapable of walking through this dilemma with my head held high, my zeal for life wouldn't allow me to give up hope. After all, as long as I remain educated on the facts, follow a healthy diet plan and adhere to my treatment, I know that everything will be fine.

The worst obstacle for me is dealing with other people's ignorance. For instance, I often hear people classify HIV as a disease; it's a virus. I also often hear people talk negatively about people living with HIV, as if we don't have emotional needs. Sadly, many in society still lack clarity on this virus because they don't take the initiative to get educated. Instead, many allow what has been disseminated over the years via the media to define how they view the virus and those living with it. This is what creates the increased HIV infection rate.

And although there are countless online and print resources available to those living with HIV, many neglect to reach out for them. This is why over the years I've grown less enthralled with trying to understand how this virus diminishes my immunity. It's a waste of thought and precious time. Instead, I've learned to focus on bettering myself.

I'm currently completing two degrees, an associates of science with a concentration in computer technology, and a bachelor of arts with a concentration in e-marketing. Since returning to college five years ago, I've learned a great deal about myself and the world we live in. I'm happy that I chose to go back to school, because it's given me a new outlook for a brighter and better future. I believe we must continue to educate our minds as long as we live.

Meanwhile, I maintain a healthy workout program, which enables me to increase my muscle mass and decrease my chances of developing additional ailments such as diabetes, which both my parents have. I'm certainly aware that diabetes does not mix well with HIV. I also try to eat healthy: vegetables, fruit, nuts, nonfat foods and plenty of water.

I also enjoy traveling to various destinations, locally and within driving range. Doing so has enabled me to continue reaching for a greater understanding of this world we live in.

But the most dynamic part of being HIV positive is knowing how to ignore ignorance. More and more laws force us to share our private health matters with others who may or may not accept our status. I strive to remain hopeful and continue to implement strategies for empowering myself.

I never thought I'd live to see the day when I would be finishing college, let alone with two degrees. But here I am, alive and moving toward a better tomorrow, more equipped than before and capable of sustaining the rough tide that often washes us ashore.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Outgoing, exciting, compassionate

What is your greatest achievement?
Finding solace with my faults and learning how to better the person I am

What is your greatest regret?
My past mistakes. I've done some stupid stuff over the years, but time heals all wounds.

What keeps you up at night?
Studying and working

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
To have a cure

What is the best advice you ever received?
Don't give up on myself.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Lena Richardson Well. She was a colleague who embraced every guy that entered the clinic we worked in. She's deceased now, but her agility and tenacity live on in my heart.

What drives you to do what you do?
My desire for life drives me to do what I do.

What is your motto?
Ignore those who hate me, love those who respect me and treat everyone the same.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My cats and my computer

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

A cat, because cats are quiet and demure and they enjoy playing. They love to rest and seek constant affection.

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