Coming Full Circle

Jessica Zajesky, RN, works as a nurse at a facility where her mother was once a patient living with HIV.

August 15, 2022 By Jessica Zajesky, RN

I'm a nurse who works in what was one of the first comprehensive AIDS treatment centers in upstate New York. My mother was a patient here after she was diagnosed with HIV in 1987. Working here feels a little like coming full circle. I remember all too well the unbearable stigma that people with HIV faced. Our housekeeper quit, some friends and even some family shunned us and at one point the PTA wanted us out of our school. I remember watching my mother try to shoulder all of that in addition to the weight of her disease.

The staff at the center were warm, welcoming and made her feel safe. Being able to be a part of that team now and provide the same love and support to my patients has been so rewarding—and healing—for me in many ways. I work with a dynamic group of people who come to work each day and make a difference for our patients, and I feel lucky to be a part of that team. We have come a long way in HIV since it came into my life, but we still have a long way to go.

What is your greatest achievement? Overcoming the things I have overcome to become the person I am. It's been a long and tempestuous road at times, and I was not always the best version of myself. But I feel like I'm pretty close these days.

Jessica Zajesky and her momCourtesy of Jessica Zajesky

What is your greatest regret? Not getting to know my mother as an adult and that my children and nephews and nieces will never meet her. She would have been exceptionally amazing at the grandma gig.

What is your motto? “Your traumas can be triumphs or tragedies; it’s up to you to decide what you do with them.”

What is the best advice you ever received? Don’t judge a life you’ve never had to lead. You don’t always know what people are going through, so be kind.

Read other POZ Stories or share your own at poz.com/stories.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/coming-full-circle-jessica-zajesky