# Sex and the Single Positoid

What's the mystery of dating a person with HIV? You get along or you don't

March 1, 1997 By Shawn Decker

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Many of my friends pity me, especially my negatoid pals. Being a young, straight, HIV positive guy in the dating world is a very tough gig. Tougher than acting opposite Tony Danza. Tougher than watching a *Small Wonder* marathon. Tougher than Charles Bronson and, man, is that old fucker tough.

As it turns out, the ladies don't dig HIV these days. Nevermind that I'm a willing stud capable of fulfilling one's every fantasy. NOOOoooo, how dare a positoid think such thoughts?

Being as open as I am, I've found out it's hard for people to get past the whole virus thing. When I speak about disclosing, I am talking about up-front knowledge of my status in a dating situation. If I like a gal, then wham, she gets the scoop on me right away.

A lot of people in the HIV community would advise someone like me against this kind of first-date disclosure. Basically the argument is, if HIV is one of the first things someone knows about you, it nullifies the potential for growth and development in a relationship. And I agree.

But when you've spent most of your entire dating life dreading the moment when you have to bring up HIV (Before we go see Ernest Scared Stoopid or after?), there is a sense of freedom in spilling all those beans and not worrying about what Sally Public thinks about dating someone with-to her-one foot in the grave.

With this newfound joy and pride in my virusness comes the inevitable reality of rejection. At first mention of HIV, many of my potential dates recoil and tune out-then nothing gets through. I try to stay cool and set them at ease-usually to no avail.

So, I have pondered my dating dilemma and come to the conclusion that there are two myths preventing me from being a hot commodity in the world of whippersnapper romantics.

Myth One in the Positoid Safety Zone: She'll get infected. Being with an openly positive person is probably the safest thing you can do. At least with someone who is openly positive, you know you're getting the truth, not a mystery Cracker Jack prize. Sex with me will always be safe; unlike with those who don't know-or don't tell-the truth about their serostatus. This is the usual

transmission route for unsuspecting, unsafe-sex-having negatoids worldwide.

Myth Two: I'm on my deathbed. Ergo, I have been reminded of my mortality ever since my stupid diagnosis by well-meaning people and their constant concern: "How are you feeling today?" It's nice that people care, but it seems when you test positive, people's only expectation of you in life from that point on is that you die. So I am very happy not to live up to people's expectations. And when I finally do croak at age 78 (or 178), some potential date who never took a chance on Space Mountain will say, "Yup, AIDS finally got him. Good thing I never returned his calls." It's so bogus!

That is why the other big task is convincing people that you might indeed still be here when the Olympics roll around again.

Sure, being a positoid has changed the way I view this world a little, and I am glad for it. Part of being alive, for me, is sharing my views with others. Finding someone to share this with may be difficult, but I am not sweating it. In fact, I am up for the task!

Ladies, you may take a number and file in from the left, please.

And I am sure when I hook up with the right person, she will not care about silly things like viruses and Bingo. She will dig me for me. And if she can handle professional wrestling and Ernest movies, she can certainly my being HIV positive.

If someone sees me as "afflicted" instead of as an incredible impressive hunk of stud meat (OK, I'm pushing it), then there is nothing I can say. I know a lot of people out there are frightened and will never allow themselves to have the positoid dating experience, and I do not mind. I don't expect anyone to go out with me to be fair; that is silly and very Jan Brasy-esque.

All I can do it be me, and ask that you not look at me as something tragic (like New Coke or America's Funniest People), but rather view me as something cool (like the Fonz with a terrible secret).

The fact is that going out with someone who is HIV positive is really not that much different from going out with someone negative. You go out, you have fun, or you don't.

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