From the Editor

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My CD4 count is way high, and my HIV viral load is undetectable. So I can chill out and take a holiday from any other health and wellness efforts. Right?

Wrong. Sure, we're lucky to live in a day and age when state-of-the-art HIV meds mean that most of us don't have to worry about getting the kind of AIDS-related illnesses that afflicted so many of us in the early days of the epidemic. But our health and happiness aren't determined by our CD4 count and viral load alone. We're human, after all—made up of many components—heart, head, liver, kidneys, bones, skin, soul—and you need to look after all of your parts if you're going to live a long and healthy life with HIV. Think of your life as a feature film. You can't just focus on one aspect, be it the lighting, the camerawork, the acting or the editing. You've got to look at the big picture.

That's what this special issue of POZ is all about. You'll meet four very different folks who are doing well when it comes to their HIV. They've each faced other health challenges—with their kidneys, heart, mood and overall fitness and lifestyle—which they've had to address with their doctors and find creative, workable solutions. In addition to their HIV, they have a few other things in common: They all took their whole health seriously, showing up regularly for doctor visits and screenings and talking frankly about what just didn't feel right. Once they found their individual health fixes, they didn't stop there. Each of them continues to do little things every day to help keep their body and mind working as one well-oiled machine, much like a motion picture studio. It could be swapping out a Pepsi or Coke for green tea, taking a long walk at lunch instead of spending it in front of the computer, or reaching out to friends instead of isolating at home. Bit by bit, it all adds up to a big picture of wellness.

Sure, it isn't easy. But by working with your doctor and taking it one step at a time, you can be on the road to better health. As a person living with HIV for two decades, I can testify that living long-term with HIV requires creating a strategy and getting the support you need. Educating yourself about HIV and keeping up to date with the latest information can help make your choices easier. But like any Oscar-winning director, once you step behind the camera, you'll be ready to call the shots. Lights, camera, action!

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