



A Healing Touch

Longtime survivor Douglas Everson chose a path of nursing, spirituality and service.

March 17, 2026 By Douglas Everson

In 1982, I remember seeing on the ABC evening news that a new cancer, Kaposi's sarcoma, and Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) were killing young gay men in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City. I went numb. I knew I had the new disease. My new boyfriend—a flight attendant from New York City—had already given me HPV.

Safe sex was not even on the radar until 1984 or 1985. In my junior year abroad at Lancaster University in England, I would spend my nights at a disco, where I would tell Italian men, Irish men and others I was from Canada. Anywhere but the United States, where the gay men had HIV and AIDS.

When I returned to Minnesota, I joined the Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP) to learn how to give massages to dying young men. I learned a great skill and the power of healing touch and vibrant health in that MAP seminar. From that point in my life, healing touch became part of my journey, and I started to listen to my inner voice.

In 1997, my goal of becoming a registered nurse at Kaiser came to fruition, thanks to a mentor I had at the department of rehabilitation. We were both members of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose, where I started my mystical life. At about the same time, I became a Soka Gakkai International (SGI) chanter of the simple Buddhist chant “Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.”

Being a nurse at Kaiser hospital was an ethical and rewarding career. My role included training the new nurses at the hospital.

When the new triple cocktail HIV medication came out, it gave me hope to start a family and life. My Colombian husband brought new meaning into my life. We were married in 2008, in Clear Lake Iowa, where the young crooner Richie Valens died in a tragic winter plane crash.

Today, we live in San Francisco with our teenage stepson. The three of us are avid health nuts who lift weights and eat healthy food. We're also avid readers. My husband is an actor whose first film came out on Amazon, and our stepson is applying to nursing school. I'm retired, and I love spending time writing gay short stories about growing up in the upper Midwest. We are all chanters of Buddhism. All three of us practice spirituality and teach others to be strong leaders in our community. We are all storytellers in one form or another, whether through acting or chanting

or mentoring others in our community. We all enjoy helping others find their inner voice.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Charismatic, tenacious, compassionate.

What is your greatest regret?

Hanging on to broken men for too long because of my fear of being abandoned.

What keeps you up at night?

Worrying how to teach my teenage stepson how to be an assertive advocate for himself.

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

Take the high cost of HIV meds out of the equation.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Don't burn bridges in life with people.

What person in the HIV community do you most admire?

Greg Louganis and my best mate in Brazil who owns love motels for gay people.

What drives you to do what you do?

My inner voice and my divine self.

What is your motto?

Light, love, life.

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

My Rosicrucian sanctum items, and my SGI Gohonzon scroll [a scroll that serves as an object of devotion].

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

A killer whale because of the way they are so tightly bonded together as a group.