Henry Nunez

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Long Beach, CA
Positive since 2007

When I disclosed that I was HIV positive to my best friend, Sabrina (my princess and grace), it saddened me very much to see her cry. I knew that the tears she shed for me that night when I gave her the news, and when I confirmed all the rumors she had heard, were not tears of joy. She knows me well, she loves me, and of course fear set in. I don't recall if I actually said it, but I wanted to tell her that I was sorry. Sorry for being stupid, careless, and selfish.

I came in contact with the virus at the age of 27. The year was 2007, and in July, I received medical results that confirmed my suspicion that I was HIV positive.

I remember taking the news pretty well. I had to. I was almost 100 percent sure that my results were going to come back positive. The nastiness of my drug addiction, resentments and heartache drove me to the devil's playground, and it was there where I came in contact with the venom. The snake bit me, and its venom still runs through the blood in my veins today.

I guess I can say that the fact that I was diagnosed when I was increased my chances of living a longer life with the virus. And in this day and age, it looks like we're getting closer and closer to a cure. Even if a cure isn't to be found (which I highly doubt), at least today's medications grant us the miracle of controlling the virus. This way, those of us who are alive and positive can look into the future far ahead of us.

Above all, I have to admit that there is no one I can blame but myself for the consequences of my actions after making very bad choices. Perhaps if hard drug use hadn't existed in my life, my chances of becoming HIV positive would have been less likely or perhaps nil. I tend to believe that everything happens for a reason. After learning some hard lessons, I've confirmed that the universe is based on cause and effect—all your actions, good or bad, come back to you. Sometimes, we simply have to walk through darkness to get to the light.

I have been fighting addiction for a couple of years. It is not easy. In our worst times, we have to look for our victory. When fear sets in, I pray harder. It is very important to keep faith, and even more important to take one day at a time, to stay healthy, to take my meds religiously as prescribed, and to see my doctor regularly. A great support system is a determinant in my life and my recovery today. I must also acknowledge the support from the four most important people in

my life: my mother, Sofia, and my brothers, Roger and Noe. They definitely keep me going.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Funny, outgoing, and I can be stubborn at times

What is your greatest achievement?
Well, I've achieved quite a few things in life. However, my past drug addiction destroyed those achievements. My greatest achievement is yet to come.

What is your greatest regret?
I can't say that I have any regrets. I've made a lot of mistakes. I've learned from them, and I keep going with thicker skin.

What keeps you up at night?
Nothing. I'm always running around and staying busy throughout the day until it's time for bed. I hit the pillow and knock out. Zzzzzz…

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
You know, taking meds on a daily basis is a daily reminder that in fact I am living with HIV. Most likely I'd change that if I could.

What is the best advice you ever received?
Whether it's advice or not, I love it when my mom tells me, "God still has you here for a reason. We all have a mission. You as well. Figure it out and follow it." She's awesome.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
All those who advocate.

What drives you to do what you do?
Today, I am determined to stay strong and healthy. HIV drives me to stay in the moment and cherish what really matters. Someday I hope to write a book and share my story and give those in need hope.

What is your motto?
Live and let live.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
Oh god, I can't even think when I panic. If I had to evacuate immediately, it's probably because I'm in danger. I'd grab my panic and run out. Run, Henry, run!!!

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
I would be an elephant, because elephants are smarter than we think, and they care for each other deeply.

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