From the Inside: Strength to Spare

During her 15-year battle to stay healthy with HIV and hepatitis C in prison, Beverly “Chopper” Henry, 59, has maintained an inspiring, positive attitude. She credits her well-being and determination to a refusal to hide her HIV-positive status. Here are her 10 tips for other positive prisoners:

November 1, 2008 By Beverly Henry

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1. Focus on you; learn all you can about your own health.
2. If you’re on meds, take them as instructed—don’t miss doses, and don’t hide or share meds.
3. Join (or create) a support group with other positive peers.
4. Talk openly about HIV (and hep C)—that will help you and everyone else, even those in denial.
5. Avoid “high risk” behaviors, including getting tattoos.
6. Exercise regularly and often. Even in solitary you can run and jump in place and do push-ups and sit-ups in your cell.
7. Eat regularly and as well as possible. Avoid undercooked eggs, beef and chicken.
8. Stay hydrated and as cool as possible in summer, warm in winter.
9. Accept and love yourself. You are NOT a health hazard; HIV and hep C are not a curse.
10. Laugh every single day.

Beverly Henry is scheduled for release from Central California Women’s Facility(CCWF) in October 2009.

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