Jose Santos

August 22, 2014

Boston, Massachusetts
Positive since 1995

When I was diagnosed with HIV in 1995, I was in a hole mentally and socially with nearly everyone I came in contact with. But after years of dealing with the stigma and people's ignorance, I came to my senses and accepted HIV in my life.

I told my family I was HIV positive on the same day I found out. They were a bit worried about me because they believed HIV was a death sentence. I wanted to remove that idea from their heads, so I educated myself on HIV and taught them about the virus.

When I was in my early years, I used drugs and spent 12 years in prison. I spent that time learning about HIV.

When I was released from prison in 2008, I joined a program called Span, Inc. They helped me get back in the community. I still go to this organization for a safe haven from the world of drug use. I'm also in a harm reduction program called Victory House in the south end of Boston.

Now after years of fighting stigma and having people judge me because of a virus that I didn't ask for, I'm trying to use the Internet to speak out on disrespectful thoughts and insults. I created a Facebook page called "Support for all those living with HIV," to provide info on where people can get support.

I want to help people get educated like I did when I first found out that I was positive. I want to be a part of the fight against ignorance and help mankind get over this problem.

What is your greatest achievement?
My greatest achievement is that every day I'm learning how to live with HIV and I'm doing my best to help others do the same so we can keep fighting this and help future generations.

What is your greatest regret?
I feel I don't have enough time on this earth to show people that the only way we can end HIV is with education in schools, in homes, on TV, etc.

What keeps you up at night?

Insomnia

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
I would give it a better name than HIV.

What is the best advice you ever received?
Never say, “I will try,” because trying is only a half-hearted attempt.

What drives you to do what you do?
My responsibility to help people in the world

What is your motto?
To do everything you do in stereo

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
Three things: My dog, my family and the safe with all of my important papers.

If you could be any animal, what would you be?
A dragon

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/jose-santos-26065-1863