Letters—April/May 2013

March 20, 2013

Love Is in the Air
In the article "Heart to Heart" (January/February 2013), three HIV-positive couples shared their inspiring love stories and offered advice for making the romance last.

These stories are very inspirational. I hope that something like this can be a reality for me. It is good to have these stories, but many HIV-positive people are struggling to find love.

Lane

I would like to thank POZ for the wonderful job it is doing. Last year I met a wonderful man on POZ [Personals]. We got married in December 2012. He is such a wonderful individual. I believe he is my soul mate. He makes me laugh, and he holds my hand when we are together no matter where we are. He goes shopping with me and never complains that I am taking too long. He makes me so happy.

Lesley-Ann Dupont-Ellis
The Bronx, New York

I fell in love with [all of] the stories, but Linda [Scruggs'] story really hit home. I was diagnosed at age 30 during a pregnancy checkup. I truly understand the stress [of] dealing not only with your [own] health but [also with] the life of a newborn. I am recently divorced and got to the point where I stopped leaving the house and dared not date. Flash forward after healing: I created a dating profile on POZ Personals, and I just met an amazing positive man.

Shu
Federal Way, Washington

I tested positive one month after my wife of 20 years also tested positive; she survived six months. It's been five years now, and I'm stronger, healthier and looking ahead. These articles help me and, I'm sure, others to look much farther ahead in life, and [they] give us all hope.

Alan

Schenectady, New York

A Question of Responsibility
In the blog post "Uncle Poodle Presses Charges, Partner Sentenced to 5 Years," Sean Strub questioned the decision by Lee Thompson (a.k.a. Uncle Poodle on Here Comes Honey Boo Boo) to press charges against his former boyfriend for giving him HIV.

You weren't there. You don't know what happened. Stop exonerating every irresponsible creep out there. Like it or not, Georgia has a law about this, so Thompson was fully within his rights to seek prosecution.

Dave

It's up to both parties to protect each other. I find no excuse to put someone in prison for passing on HIV to another. If this is the case, we should all pack our bags and load up to the nearest prison and sit there for the rest of our lives.

Rhiannon

We are each responsible for our own mortality. If you want to have sex, it's your responsibility to make sure a condom is used and questions are asked. I hold no one but myself responsible for my HIV status. Educate yourself on these things [whether] you are positive or negative. It's your life. Ignorance is no excuse.

Terrance Creger

An HIV-negative partner's responsibility to protect their own health in no way exonerates an HIV-positive partner from infecting them. Condom usage cannot be invoked as a smokescreen to absolve HIV-positive people of culpability for transmitting HIV to unsuspecting partners. None of us knows what actually transpired between these two men. However imperfect they remain, our courts are still the most trustworthy mechanism for determining the truth underlying these encounters.

Jeton Ademaj

Sean Strub Responds:
No one should knowingly put others at risk of harm, nor should one put oneself at risk of harm. HIV prevention is a shared responsibility; putting people in jail for not disclosing is a bad idea.

If a partner lies, there is recourse in the civil courts. People shouldn't be able to lie with impunity

when their deception harms another. But that is different from saying someone should go to jail for five years in a circumstance where the responsibility for HIV prevention is a shared one.

These statutes and prosecutions harm the public health by discouraging HIV testing, disclosure and accessing treatment. What purpose do they serve except to further stigmatize HIV? I'm not saying it is entirely Poodle's fault; I'm saying it is very likely not entirely the fault of the partner he says he has put in jail for five years.

Facing the Facts
The article "Myths of Black MSM" (January/February 2013) examined the rising HIV rates of African-American men who have sex with men and highlighted data from the XIX International AIDS Conference to explain why black MSM are at a higher risk for HIV.

When will the CDC be held accountable? They dictate what prevention services they will fund even though all of those services have been a dismal failure. Epidemiologists do not know what it is like to grow up in a religious-based sexually suppressed environment, while hormones are raging.

Skip
Ann Arbor, MI

Until Americans get off their high horse and stop judging people living with the virus, we won't have any changes in the infection rates. Schools must teach comprehensive sex ed, alongside abstinence education, in order to give everyone the knowledge they need to protect themselves and their partners. We don't want to lose another generation to this virus because of the silence and judgment of others.

Eliza Jane
Boston

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