Letters—September 2013

August 6, 2013

Striking a Chord
In the essay "The Sound of Stigma" (June 2013), Mark S. King reflects on why stigma persists among gay men. While not everyone agreed with him, he certainly touched many of our readers. The essay received more than 140 comments on POZ.com.

Very powerful piece. Thank you for articulating what so many of us are experiencing.

John-Manuel Andriote, Norwich, CT

This is so true! As a long-term survivor, it is important for me to see my role in stigma, as well as how it has affected my community.

Jim Kane, Winnipeg

Finally. There it is in black and white. I'm grateful to you for writing this piece.

Jude, Philly

This was one of the best articles I've read in a long time. Well done.

Healthadvocate

I have been living with this for 27 years. My pet peeve is people who equate "clean" with "disease-free." Clean means you showered, douched, vacuumed or made the bed, not that you don't have an STD of some kind.

Hardtopftl

Exactly the way I have been feeling and treated by my fellow gay and straight human beings. This was perfectly written. So clear and precise in capturing the stigma that we all know exists, yet

refuse to accept and take responsibility for. It’s amazing that we haven’t learned our lesson yet. This truly inspired me.

Bob, Boston

I hear you. Though there are some HIV-negative men who do not judge, who do not condescend, who accept those with HIV just as they are, and are capable of love.

Scott, Long Beach, CA

One of the best pieces I’ve read in quite a while. Bravo.

Jem, New York

Thank you for your thoughtful and heartfelt commentary. I have also been HIV positive since 1985 and have witnessed firsthand all that you speak! The best way I can honor our brothers who died from this horrible plague is to live my life with compassion and no judgment. Your words inspire me to be an even better gay man.

Nigel Priestley, Boca Raton, Florida

To the point, well said.

Blktoto, Hartford

Thanks for the insight and the reflection of what goes on in our community and what we fail to address and acknowledge.

HI Hunter, Dunn, NC

Simply an amazing piece. I am at a loss for words….

Joe, San Diego

As a long-term survivor, all I can say is thank you. I will now do my best to get this to go viral (pardon the pun).

Russell, Toronto

Thank you for writing this well-thought essay. From one who prays the stigma will just stop, it was actually cleansing and somewhat healing to see this said so eloquently, truthfully and courageously for the world to see.

Chris

A deep reality check of how we behave, think and view each other. Great article.

Mark, Brooklyn

Thank you for such an honest and enlightened reflection.

Rev. Joseph Shore-Goss, Sun Valley

What a crybaby. The caste system has always been in place and always will. Gays in particular and society in general always seek to make walls between its members. Gym-ers vs. non-gym-ers, lesbians vs. gays, young vs. old, bears vs. slim, pretty vs. not so pretty. It is up to us to ignore these barriers or succumb to them—our choice. To whine about it is so unproductive.

Robert Gould, San Diego

What a fabulous article. We do have a long way to go until we can have a world where those diagnosed can be equal to those that are not. My partner is positive and I'm negative, and we see the stigma he puts up with even in our friends' comments and actions. It was something difficult to understand until reading this article.

Daniel Moen, Georgetown

All I can say is AMEN!

John, Raleigh

This could have been an amazing article, except that Mark relies on dramatic overgeneralizations about gay men in general, which I find very offensive, thereby cutting his argument to that of a bitter queen. Blaming each other and stereotyping our actions do nothing to help the situation at all.

Scott, Buffalo, NY

Wow, what an amazing article. What a very true representation of what having HIV feels like.

Jjemcdonald, Knoxville

We should all share this so as many people as possible can look in the mirror and assess their own part (if any) in the stigmatizing of HIV-positive people. Stigma needs to be squashed within the gay community now.

Keith, Kildare

BRAVO! This tells it exactly the way it is. I suffer daily from the sting of being rejected and seen as someone who is just walking death. It has caused me so much pain, resentment and all-out hate for the people who have rejected me. Thank you for expressing what I have not yet been able to….

JJO, Longview, Texas

Very powerful and timely article. Thank you.

Junior Harrison, Toronto

Negative guys who treat the infected with contempt should be aware that their attitudes further fuel the epidemic by encouraging people to avoid getting tested or telling their partners they are positive.

RZ, DC

Mark S. King responds:
I never imagined such strong responses when I wrote this, and I thank all of you for the feedback. I hear a lot of pain, and I also hear those who found my language indulgent; it was meant to provoke you and give voice to a silent phenomenon. For those who feel the stigma, you have my whole heart, and I encourage you to celebrate your strength and self-empowerment. Thanks also to those who wish to bridge the viral divide—your messages of reconciliation are the most moving of all.

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