



A Moment Like This

I am in control of how I respond to life's curveballs.

March 24, 2025 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I tested HIV negative in 1991. As a sexually active 21-year-old gay man living in New York City, I had every reason to feel relieved at that test result. The universe had given me a brief reprieve. I tested positive in 1992.

That year gave me the opportunity to reflect on my past behavior and prepare for a better future. I believe I did the best I could during that year. Regardless, despite my sincere efforts to avoid the virus, I got HIV.

Accepting the fact that I am not always in control when it comes to how my life turns out was a difficult lesson. But what it taught me was important: I am in control of how I respond to life's curveballs. Ever since, I've been guided by that realization.

Fast-forward to 2025, when the Serenity Prayer has been my North Star: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference." In or out of a religious context, I believe these simple words always have much to offer us, but more so these days.

That's as true for the world of politics as it is for our personal lives. We cannot fight our best for what matters most to us if we are not well—physically, mentally and spiritually. I often fall short of keeping myself healthy, but I aspire every day to that goal. Total health is a journey, not a destination.

Our cover subject, Daniel Garza, is living proof of that idea. Now 54, he tested HIV positive in 2000. As a public speaker, he has much to share: "I get up and talk about growing up Latino and gay, about addiction, about my life with HIV, about having anal cancer and living with an ostomy bag and about the connection between all of them."

Go [here](#) to read more about how Daniel uses humor to educate about sexual health and living a positive life.

In this special issue about sexual health, we also meet two other advocates: filmmaker and actor Timothy Guion Smith and youth health activist Joshua Jaffe.

Timothy, a Filipino American living with HIV, directed and acted in the short film Next of Kin, which features an HIV storyline. Sexual health and family ties are prominent themes of the film. Go [here](#) to read about his thoughts on HIV advocacy and art.

Joshua, a 20-year-old student at the University of Oregon in Eugene, is the president of the Harm Reduction Club at University of Oregon, a student group affiliated with Oregon's HIV Alliance. Go [here](#) to read how he hopes to make condoms cool again.

If you are currently involved in HIV advocacy, then you may be in need of a pep talk. Go [here](#) to read words of wisdom by Tami Haught and Kamaria Laffrey, co-executive directors of Sero Project.

Raising awareness, promoting education and supporting policies and actions that improve prevention, treatment and care for folks living with and affected by HIV is a lot. Take our [survey](#) at the back of this issue to tell us your thoughts about HIV advocacy today.