



# A New Chapter

James Cotromanes reminds you an HIV diagnosis doesn't mean it's the end of your story.

December 15, 2020 By James Cotromanes

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When you are first diagnosed, it feels like you have been given a life sentence. You feel isolated and alone. You are left within the whirlwind of your thoughts and emotions. It is a mental and emotional roller coaster of coming to terms with the new reality that you have HIV.

Though it can be seen as a life sentence in terms of it being a lifelong medical condition, you remain free. This is one of many chapters in your life, with much of the journey—and its conclusion—still to be written. It is a new chapter and a new beginning—of self-awareness, individual purpose and happiness.

Living with this chronic condition undoubtedly has its calm waters and turbulent storms, but it doesn't define who you are. On your journey through life, you have the power to chart your course. That being said, turn living with HIV from a perceived weakness into a strength.

Recognize HIV for what it is, but also have the realization that it has brought forth positive change in your life. I know this to be true because I too am HIV positive. With one step at a time forward, let us enjoy this journey together.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Empathetic, outgoing, funny.

What is your greatest regret?

Not finishing my bachelor's degree sooner.

What keeps you up at night?

An undetermined yet bright future.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

Stigma.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Agree to disagree.

What person in the HIV community do you most admire?

Magic Johnson.

What drives you to do what you do?

To achieve my goals and aspirations.

What is your motto?

Live life to the fullest.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?

Cell phone.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

Wolf. A wolf is intelligent and strong, a leader and a survivor.

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