Positively Living

Devanta Tyler believes the only time you lose is when you don't try.

June 6, 2022 By Devanta Tyler

My name is Devanta Tyler, however, my preferred name is Chiina. I am HIV positive. Growing up I knew I was different. I always knew that my purpose in life would be different. I was diagnosed with HIV at the sensitive age of 18, the start of my adulthood. When I was 16, I contracted the virus from a partner who failed to inform me of his status. I was in denial and created delusions in my head that I was negative and decided to take myself out of care.

I ended up in the hospital with HIV-related pneumonia and HIV-related kidney failure. I was placed on a ventilator for months and barely weighed 90 pounds. Yet I stand here today strong—no more dialysis—and my HIV is undetectable. I decided to live a life that could help someone like me. I am now an ambassador for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Let's Stop HIV Together" campaign and a community health worker/project coordinator at Community Health Pier, an HIV-driven community-based organization located in Greenville, Mississippi.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Resilient, intelligent, favored.

What is your greatest achievement?

Defying the odds of death and overcoming negative thoughts of the virus. Picking myself back up and getting back into care and maintaining perfect health.

What is your greatest regret?

Feeling as if my life was no longer worth living because I was HIV positive and making the decision to get out of care, which almost cost me my life.

What keeps you up at night?

Lately, nothing. I have been at peace knowing I spend my days doing what God has purposed me

to do.

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

Having to take medication. If our body could manage it by itself, I'd be just fine.

What is the best advice you ever received?

The only time you lose is when you don't try.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?

My boss, Cedric Sturdevant. I have seen his face in many magazines and in a few documentaries and was inspired by his confidence in speaking out. It made me comfortable enough to do so as well.

What drives you to do what you do?

That my dad passed away from AIDS-related complications when I was 13 years old and my diagnosis at age 18. It makes the fire burn much higher.

What is your motto?

"Positively living is the only way to live."

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

My HIV medicine for sure, I dare not have another death episode!

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

A lion, because its strong, resilient and fierce, kind of like me!

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