The Beginning of a Drug-Free, Drama-Free Life

And it all began with a questionnaire and a Cookie!

July 19, 2019 By JMV

I enjoy a gentle sense of freedom today because of events back in 2015, when I said goodbye to a relationship. It's the reason I can ride around freely in Provincetown on a bike and feel alive.

At the end of 2015, I ended it with Collin. I walked away. Parts of me still wanted to reach out to him, but I knew to keep A healthy distance. I'd visit the dog and him, and we would occasionally go to dinner and speak, but nothing too intimate. I couldn't put myself in that position again.

It didn't take long for my life to pick up post-relationship. I think my path started with being asked to do an exposé for Huffington Post from a friend Michael Cook (aka Cookie). My story had caught his eye, and he thought I could help someone by telling it. (You can read Cook's HuffPo interview with me here.) For the article, he sent me a list of questions, and I can recall my mind and my heart opening as I typed each response. It started with how I ended up in NYC.

We all have our reasons for moving to New York, but usually it has something to with making it in our various career paths or passions. Cookie's project arrived at a perfect time of my life and my struggle with sobriety, and it helped me refocus. I was getting a fresh start, and it felt like the perfect way to kick off 2016—without drugs, alcohol or a codependent relationship.

Often times when I'm faced with a road block along the highways of life, I find that they're just obstacles I put up myself, mostly from self-will. The detours are bound to pop up, but they often lead to the same desired destination, not stopping me altogether.

Tears well up in my eyes as I sit here remembering the goodness that came from this piece by Cookie. My heart poured out with a cheeky tone. I spoke about my sobriety and my dreams that had been lost in nightlife and booze. I could finally see that each time I had lit that torch to burn that meth pipe, I was extinguishing my hopes and aspirations.

What does this have to do with Living with HIV? Telling my tale to Cookie was the first step in opening up about my status on a larger scale, other than between friends or intimate relations. It was the first time I recognized that being so raw with my story could not only change me in a beautiful way but also help someone else. It was the first time I felt a sense of peace with myself for a moment. The world was only going to open.

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