Being “The Healthy One”

July 1, 2011 By Shawn Decker

In my educational efforts with Gwenn, I fully understand my role as the positoid- I’m there to answer questions about what it’s been like living with HIV for well over two decades. Often the topic of my AIDS diagnosis in 1999 (12 years after my HIV diagnosis and shortly after I met Gwenn) comes up, and we talk about how that event really brought Gwenn and I closer as I started HIV medications on the road to recovery.

And since we’ve been together, Gwenn has been the healthy one in the couple. Not a surprise since she is HIV negative. But lately, she’s been dealing with a stomach ailment that has really knocked her out. She’s seen a few doctors (“Are you pregnant?” is the common question) to discuss the nausea. It could be hormonal, since it occurs mostly around the time she gets her period. But right now, it’s a bit of a mystery; all we know is that the last couple of weeks have been very hard.

For me, the role reversal has required patience. Psychological, I’ve conditioned myself to deal with being sick. I’ve had those flus, colds, lingering things that don’t seem to go away until they do- and then life resumes. I’m not sure when, but after so many of those little bouts I realized that they are just part of my life. It’s easier for me to be the sick one than it is to be the one worrying about the sick one.

I’m thankful that Gwenn is feeling better now. Her appetite is coming back. She’s gaining weight after losing 10 lbs in two weeks. She has more doctor’s appointments to try and figure out what’s up. And that’s also something I have to remember- when I’m sick I know it’s because my immune system can be overwhelmed easily despite an HIV drug regimen that has worked well for me. For Gwenn, it’s a mystery what’s causing her nausea.

Two things we know is that she is not pregnant. And she is not HIV positive. Interestingly enough, none of the doctors she’s spoken to have offered an HIV test, instead they assumed it was acid reflux or Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Both of which lead to her taking medication that- wait for it, wait for it…- made her nauseous. Ah, the rollercoaster that is our health. The best thing I can do is make sure the safety bar is locked, and that I hold on to Gwenn’s hand during the scary parts.

The same way she’s done for me.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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