# Disclosure

February 4, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

I think one of the most difficult thing to do for someone who's HIV positive is when to disclose your status, especially when you meet someone who has the qualities you see that can lead into a relationship. Some may see it as being deceitful by not disclosing early on, but it's not that simple.

Part of the problem is the continued stigma that exists around HIV. For instance isn't it amazing how everyone on Adam4Adam is negative in their profile? They know as that they are less desirable or have no value if they placed their true status. That's how stigma works, it makes you feel devalued and you feel like 'one of them'.

I have to admit i can't lump everyone in the same bowel as there are now some HIV negative men who are educated and aware of HIV and still it doesn't deter them from seeking a relationship with someone positive, but they don't walk around with a sign around their neck saying, "I understand". So we don't know who and where they are.

For me my reason of not disclosing was the fear of rejection. I was afraid that once I told you my status then that would be the end of any relationship, even if it was a friendship. In fact it did happen to me several times when I told two individuals who were interested in me that I was positive.

Immediately I was placed on the "Do Not Call Registry" and left with the feeling of feeling dirty asking myself was it worth it to be honest.

When is it the right time?

It's tricky because along with the rejection you're then faced with having someone knowing your health status and not knowing are they going to share it with their friends on Facebook or what in general will they do with it. So you weigh it. Do I show you my luggage on the first date or maybe the second when we don't really know each other or do I share it after we have meet a couple of times and you ended the night by giving me an unexpected peck on the lips.

The demonetization of someone having HIV still exist and for some they put on their blinders and figure as long as I'm safe I don't have to tell you anything.

Admittedly that's what I chose to do. If I knew it was going to be a one night stand, I would play safe but keep my information quiet. It worked for me for awhile until I met my current partner who is negative.

We started off as a booty call but then there was something magic that was happening. I dismissed it but still unlike others he was just in my mind. To the point of me behaving like a school age child and daydreaming a life together and before you know it I've written down my

name and his and wrapped it in a heart.

Yet I was afraid because how was I going to let him know that I was positive without him freaking out. In my fear I remained silent and told myself as long as we practiced safe sex then there was no need to turn back the clock. But then we moved to the level of boyfriend. Now what was I going to do? Even worse after a few months had passed he suggested we move in together. I was getting deeper and deeper into my hole.

How was I going to move in with him and explain the prescription bottles in the medicine cabinet? How was I going to explain the one med that needed to be in the fridge? How was I going to explain taking my 'vitamins' everyday at the same time from bottles where the labels were missing? How was i going to continue living a lie?

I eventually told the truth after being in a relationship with him for two years. I figured by then he would know the kind of person i was and know I was not trying to be dishonest but was afraid. Telling him, I was not ready for his reaction. He simply told me, "It doesn't change the way I feel about you". Twelve years later the feeling is still the same. That's another funny thing about stigma, it's a two way street. We receive stigma so we stigmatize others. It's a vicious circle. I just assumed he wouldn't want to be with me.

Not everyone has my happy ending and I wish they did. I wish people were more understanding and accepting like my partner.

Just because you have HIV doesn't mean you don't want to have someone special in your life. I feel everyone should have somebody, and not just for the sex but to share the world with. I learned that sometimes we have to take that chance and jump in the water and open ourselves. Yes you may get hurt but you may also find someone who has unconditional love for you. The lie can become greater than the disease and if someone doesn't want you for who you are then really they're not worthy of the love you have to offer.

Never forget your worth!

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