#DoingItMyWay Through the Ups and Downs

August 28, 2018 By Shawn Decker

This Summer has been a doozy.

I kicked things off in June with some mild depression. Apparently I have Seasonal Summer Depression- my love pointed this out a few years ago. I'm not sure why my spirit starts to sag as Summer kicks in, but it does. Thankfully, by early July I was shaken out of my blues by that GI bleed and viral tweet that I recently blogged about. When I'm faced with a clear and present threat to my health, my natural inclination is to do everything in my power to defeat the challenge. Without even trying, my mind got in line and the clouds started to lift.

Having a viral tweet also helped.

A lot of times I feel like I'm not educating as much as I should be. Even though that tweet was a few carefully chosen sentences, it showed that people with HIV have happy and fulfilling lives. Ironic since just a week or so before I wrote that tweet I was pretty damn miserable. Another thing that has been a good thing is being a part of the #DoingItMyWay HIV testing campaign. It inspired Gwenn and I to make a new HIV testing video.

Getting tested for HIV- now that's something that can cause some anxiety. But for Gwenn and I, it's not a big deal. Sharing our comfort with her getting tested and knowing that, perhaps, that video could help inspire someone to finally learn their status... well, that thought makes me a happy camper.

As the next season approaches, the far cheerier Fall (my favorite season!), I'm going to take a few lessons I've learned this Summer forward. One is: don't wait for a medical issue to bail me out of an extended down phase. Aside from having a wonderful partner in Gwenn, I also have a great psych doc who always says, "if you need anything, call!"

I never do. Maybe it's some lingering pride or my old-school habit of waiting for it to pass. I accept that there are ups and downs for me, emotionally. And sometimes there isn't a trigger for a down phase; it just happens. Last year I started taking an anti-depressant, not as a fix-all but just as proactive move to address the issue. I remember when I first started taking HIV meds- I feared that daily reminder of being sick.. which changed over time as I got healthier and healthier. For many years now, taking my HIV meds represents my good fortune of making it to a time when

these were available, and that they’ve worked like a charm for me.

The anti-depressant is a daily reminder that I’m doing more than I ever have before to stay on top of my mental health. Which is good. And I know I can do more, and each time I have a blue phase I learn something new about myself.

Hope this finds you well. As always, thanks for reading, and take care of yourself.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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