Family Secret

February 4, 2014 By Aundaray Guess

One of my sad truths that I don't really share is my relationship or perhaps my non-relationship with my family. Before I begin, I have always had a certain feeling about people who in the public drag others on social media, so I state that is not my reason. Instead I use it as a frame to share how by not being close to family, matters such as my HIV status comes into play.

With the recent passing of the holiday's it has now become a norm for me not to receive a call or any type of acknowledgement. This past holiday wasn't different and instead of being sad I reasoned that at least they were being consistent. The one thing that did briefly come was the sadness that despite thinking I was close with everyone, the feeling wasn't mutual. I know I could have simply picked up the phone and reached out but frankly my whole life that's what I've been doing. I'm the one who has made the call or showed up unexpectedly at the front door to say help. I'm the one who has come running when there was a need and being across country I continued to be there physically. So although I could have called you finally reached that point of not wanting to be the giver. Even recently I received an email from a family member and thought maybe they were catching up. Instead it was the usual reason for reaching out, for financial assistance. It has worked in the past as I reasoned by helping they can see I want to be part of the family. It took a while for me to realize money doesn't buy love

In the early years of having HIV I was still alone in the battle despite them knowing my status. I remember doing a test where I stopped reaching out to them and wanted to see who would reach out knowing I was struggling with this new virus. I was the one who was surprised as there was no communication from any. It was that 'Wow" moment as I thought, "I could be here on the floor unable to get up for any reason and no one cared, at least my family". It's hard to wrap my head around it as when we do see each other in person we're having the greatest time, with good conversation and filling the room with laughter, but once we part the silence fills the space and goes back to being strangers.

I once asked my sister why she didn't reach out and she let me know that they expect me to since I was so good at it. It was then I realized it was my job and I shouldn't expect the feeling to be reciprocal. For that reason I now keep my life with HIV quiet as I feel they won't be the support I need although knowing with their support it'd be a great addition. And not that I want them to simply see me as the big/little brother with HIV, but knowing it's part of me I want them to be there when I want to share.

Without sounding like I'm telling anyone what to do, if I could give advice I would say don't try to

use your HIV status as leverage for someone to love you. I say that as knowing we weren't close I thought by letting them know my big secret that it would draw them in. I built myself up to say this will be the impetus for change. Scary as it was to share it was for nothing as I didn't get the results I was looking for. My lesson was using my status as a tool.

Living with HIV a person sometimes wants to use it to create that closeness. In my case it was with family. For others it may be a partner who shows little interest in you or it could be your way of trying to save a relationship that was never there or because of your denial, was over a long time ago. It also has created in me a song that says, 'I don't need anyone'. Even though I am now partnered I still find myself in moments where I feel like an orphan and don't want to depend on anyone. Having HIV this is a bad idea as we all need support but you can't help going to that feeling of being a loner after all it is safe and you won't get hurt...again.

I don't want to say that my relationship with my family is over but the truth is the truth. If they didn't talk to each other maybe it wouldn't hurt as much but knowing among each other they are a family and it's just me who's not in the loop is discouraging. In sharing this I'm not hoping to create something that is not there. I'm also sure I will get advice saying I don't need them or family is what you make with strangers. I know that all to be the truth but there is still those small quiet moments when the hurt peeks in the back door and before the hurt makes itself comfortable, you close it tight again.

So that is my story and as I continue my life surrounded by people who love me instead of holding out for arms that are not there for me, I'll embrace the ones that are there. Even with my struggles with life, and that includes my HIV status, instead of being bitter I hope they know despite current circumstances I love them. And perhaps this is my way of reaching out as it's my job to do. And in my open honesty I can make peace with my family secret.

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