



My HIV Fear: Losing Control Over My Narrative

Living with HIV, my biggest fear isn't the virus itself; it's the fear of losing control over my own narrative.

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This post, by Zora Voyce, originally appeared on [My Purora](#) and was cross-posted on [The Well Project](#).

Living with HIV, my biggest fear isn't the virus itself; it's the fear of losing control over my own narrative. It's the fear of being reduced to a stereotype, a statistic, or a societal misfit simply because of my HIV status.

Unfortunately, HIV is strongly associated with sexuality, a link that I profoundly disagree with. This association often causes people to shut down, closing their ears to information that challenges their preconceived notions. As a result, my voice often goes unheard, drowned out by the cacophony of misconceptions and stigmatizing narratives.

Our society has a way of using our sexuality to belittle our worth. It perpetuates a false narrative that engaging in sexual activity outside the bounds of monogamy is deserving of punishment. This narrative confines us within a narrow framework of acceptability, stifling our individuality and autonomy.

Despite these challenges, I've chosen to openly talk about my HIV status and my sexuality. However, a part of me fears the repercussions. I worry that some individuals may view me negatively, which could potentially affect my job prospects, particularly if employers prefer candidates with conservative lifestyles.

Being open about my sexuality can also lead to the misconception that I lack self-respect because I don't conform to the societal norm of the "relationship escalator." This prescribed path to partnership often disregards alternative relationship structures and choices.

Not conforming to society's expectations can threaten some people, leading them to believe that I engage in sexual activity to harm others, simply because I have HIV. It conveniently fits into the shameful sex narrative that our society has constructed.

Unfortunately, individuals with such beliefs may go to great lengths to criminalize me in their

misguided attempts to protect others from perceived dangers. They might spread misinformation about me through various means of communication, from social media to even threatening to involve law enforcement, all based on predetermined stereotypes about people with STDs.

For most people, the fear of HIV is rooted in the fear of being taken advantage of sexually, particularly for those who are HIV-negative. For those of us living with HIV, we often fear judgment and unreasonable discrimination.

However, these fears can diminish when we openly share our experiences and fears with each other. Engaging in open, honest conversations about sex and HIV can help break down barriers and dispel misconceptions.

So, I'd like to know: What are your HIV fears? Let's open up this dialogue. Share a picture of yourself and tag other people you know who are open about their HIV status. Let's build each other up instead of tearing each other down. Together, we can challenge the stigma and reclaim control over our narratives.

#HIVAwareness #BreakTheStigma #OwnYourNarrative

The Well Project is a non-profit organization whose mission is to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls across the gender spectrum. Visit their website, <https://www.thewellproject.org/>, to access fact sheets (English and Spanish), blogs, and advocacy tools, and to join a global community of women living with HIV.

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