How to Date Me

October 11, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

One of the most common things you will hear about having HIV is finding someone who won't reject you and will accept everything about you, which also includes your status. Dating or being in a new relationship is hard enough and by adding HIV you insert more levels of frustration. But with clear communication and expressing of feelings, two people with different status can make a relationship work. As a person who has been in a relationship for the past thirteen years I know that as a person with HIV I don't have to date exclusively someone who's positive and like my partner who's negative, he along with others are educated and aware of the disease to not run when confronted with the three letter acronym. Yet even starting out in our relationship I couldn't ignore the differences and at the time had to share with my partner valuable lessons on how to date me. Someone with HIV.

First let me say that without the HIV I'm like any other complicated person with various level of maintenance which can go from low (sure I'll try white wine with the steak) to very high (who left the toilet seat up) but when you do add HIV it can be an interesting and loving relationships that has it's own rules. In the courting moments of the relationship it's important for the other person to know the following which I also interject with humor, something we all need;

1) **I don't wake up or go to sleep with HIV**. Meaning that oftentimes I forget I have HIV and my more immediate concern may be wondering do these jeans make me look fat. So there's no need for a daily comforting "it's going to be okay' hug each morning and ending each night with eyes that say."I'm sorry". I'm sorry to but also in a weird way the virus has made me look at what's important in my life and provided me a new focus. It's not that I'm using any avoidance techniques but frankly I'm doing the same as others, I'm living the best life I can. But please don't stop the hugs as it makes good foreplay. And don't be afraid to ask any questions that strike you as many times we're both learning how to negotiate this disease in our relationship and we need to do it together.

2) **Don't stress yourself with worry when I take my daily medication**. Yes it may seem its cumbersome when I'm standing in the bathroom counting out the pills each morning and night or snapping open the daily reminder pillbox but this comes so natural to me especially being that I have been taking pills for awhile. I know that it looks intimidating to see the various size and shapes of the pills but most of the time when I take them they go down with no problem. My secret ingredient is milk so that's why I get so fussy when you drink the chocolate milk. Plus it reminds me of when I was a kid. Yes a pill may sometimes go down the wrong way and cause a gag reflex but its not the norm so having your Heimlich experience up to date is always necessary but in the case of me swallowing my pills you don't have to be at the ready.

But please feel free to question me when you see that many days have passed and I haven't taken it or I seem inconsistent. In that case call me out on my stuff as I know come from a place of love and concern.

3) **We don't have to share everything**. I'm very selfish with my status and I don't want to share. So when I ask you to put a condom on please don't tell me you're not scared. You may not be but I'm very cautious of not infecting you. It's something we both should be mindful of. I also have the same anxiety when you want to share my toothbrush. I know it may be cute but there are small risks involved that I don't want to chance. But there are plenty of things that we can share involving no risk at all and has no possibility of exchanging blood. That list includes sharing ice cream, your portion of the basil chicken duck, the remote and anything else we have in union. And please don't be stingy with the kisses as we're sharing each others heart.

4) **I get sick but so do others**. This is the tricky part of dating me. The following may be confusing but believe me when I say it'll start to have some resemblance of sense. When if comes to my status I don't want you to call 911 when I sneeze or tell you I'm tired. The truth is that everyone gets tired and yes they sneeze. But sometimes people forget that it's a natural behavior and not reserved to those with HIV. So my status doesn't make me anything special. Of course if I'm tired more than normal or have any other symptoms that last for a few weeks then we can get worried together. And remember when I say it can be tricky, here's what I was referencing to; I don't like to be smothered but I like to be smothered. While you scratch your head I'll explain.
Because going to the doctor is such a common trait of having this virus, with some going once a month to every three months, don't get offended if I tell you that you don't have to take off of work to come with me. Not that I don't want you there but it's not really a huge production. You'd be surprised on how uneventful it is and in most cases it's the same dance with the doctor. It most often goes like this; check-in, give vitals such as blood pressure/weight, let him/her know if refills need to be refilled, rinse and repeat until the next appointment unless there is a need for anything out of the norm. I know you're there with me in spirit. But if it makes you feel better just know that I treat myself to a shopping trip afterwards as reward so I often look forward to the doctor. A treat kinda like the chocolate milk.

5) And the last piece of advice is to breathe and let's have fun in the relationship.

So there you have it. That is how you date me. Someone living with HIV. I think it's pretty simple. And if we're like any other couple we will have disagreements over couple stuff but when it comes to OUR HIV, with clear communication and knowing each other we have made it work. And I know we're not the only ones and it'd be great for others to share so that those with anxiety can see it's possible to be in a relationship. How have you as a HIV positive person found love with your status?

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