Raw Sex

October 23, 2015 By Aundaray Guess

The doorbell rang and an excitement went through me. It was three in the morning and although I didn't know his real name, I was anticipating the next hour of physical sex. We talked for a few minutes on the website and both liked each other's picture and that was enough. Only when we stood in the same room did we negotiate our sexual roles for the evening. He asked me if I was into raw sex and I paused before answering. The pause was out of guilt. Yet where was the guilt coming from? It could have been the idea that having raw sex was looked down on in this sexual generation and especially as a gay man. That this close sexual contact which was embraced in the early days was now demonized. The arrival of HIV was the cause of such a negative feeling and yet how should gay men feel when they prefer the feeling of raw sex?

The disparaging view of unprotected sex came into play during my evening encounter. When he asked if I was into raw sex I didn't know if it was a judgment question and by saying yes, would he lose interest? His response could also be the same if I said no; knowing he only got off on the uninhibited action and didn't want to compromise. That was now the nature of barebacking in the age of AIDS. One had to whisper their admiration as now it was a cloak and dagger spy movie. I took a gamble and told him the truth. Yes, I liked it raw.

My anxiety of him walking out the door and being judged was an unrealized fear as he welcomed this news. I was excited that I found someone who shared the same sentiment I had. His leaving would have added to my feeling of rejection. A feeling I learned to accept as a person living with HIV. Ironically he never asked my status or maybe because we met online in a world where you can be anything, he figured I was positive. Nonetheless it was a conversation I didn't have to make with him, instilling in me an additional excitement of embracing the unknown.

I don't remember when I discovered this fascination with condomless sex. Despite the prevention warnings and the numerous printed posters of people looking like me holding up a condom, the message was falling on deaf ears. I suppose it was knowing I was already positive which attributed to my nonchalant thinking. Even then I knew there were other risks which included the possibility of becoming re-infected along with catching another STD. This was even extended to my porno watching. If the participants wore protection and were acting responsible, it was a turnoff and I would click to watch another video. Perhaps the idea of them caring about their sexual health made me feel guilty as it appeared I didn't care about mine.

Oddly it was knowing my positive HIV status that drew me to the desire of raw sex. This need

wasn’t immediately apparent as when I initially learned about my status I pushed everyone away. I created this huge barrier with invisible lines no one could cross. I restricted any sense of caring and turned away any advances. No matter what was whispered in my ear, I didn’t want anyone to touch me. I deleted all online profiles and closed any access where there was a remote possibility for sex. After all I was diseased. I was spoiled goods. I was the ’other’.

I started to feel empty, unconnected. Lost and lonely as my imagined life of not being touched became a reality. I self-selected myself to live in a bubble with my trapped emotions. I no longer experienced a person’s touch involving sex, not even a friendly hug from family members or friends. A pat on the back triggered a jerk reaction in my body as I worked to remove that offending hand. A hand of support brought forth the same response. I was deprived the human need to be touched and to feel.

So many health officials get it wrong when trying to warn of the dangers of raw sex. People who have raw sex already know the dangers and the risks. What they don’t know is how to love and be loved. To find someone who accepts you as you are, whether it’s a gay man or even one already living with HIV. Now that PrEP has arrived on the scene, warnings of raw sex is being moot, but even the arrival of PrEP itself signifies the needs of others who want that closeness. Those who don’t want a barrier in their way of lovemaking or whatever you call it, who wants to be connected. Sometimes the fascination with raw sex is looking for that connection as you simply want to be part of something.

When I felt unloved and unwanted, I wanted sex raw. It’s what kept me bonded to a person despite the sometimes negativity views of the act. It defined me as being desirable. It made me feel sexy. It made me feel. Emotions long denied to me. Although these feelings were temporary and sexual encounters sometimes meaningless, I wanted to feel something.

I have since elevated from a fantasy relationship and established a real bonding. I also no longer wrap myself in the presupposed belief that I have no value or worth because of my status. I have created a life released from shame and that includes my approach to sex. Yet I also respect those who seek the same closeness and don’t instill my judgments. If anything we need a frank talk on the preference of raw sex and instead of talking about the deficit, look at the value. And hopefully appreciate and respect those who choose to enjoy the feeling of being raw.

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