Running To Sobriety

August 2, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

“They tried to make me go to rehab, I said, no, no, no.”

Unfortunately for Amy Winehouse that decision cost her life along with the monkey on her back as she battled her addiction to drugs. Although Amy was not gay she reminded me of something that many people go through. The fight to stay sober. Most write them off as addicts or crackheads. Not realizing that for many they face a fight that, for the person outside, we may judge or dismiss as having no value, yet for those living with drug addiction it’s a battle with demons that are not easily destroyed.

And for those living with HIV it’s more of an issue as you’re adding another element to your battle.

I have personally never had that battle but I’ve been witness to those who have. Friends with HIV and also drug or alcohol addiction and their struggle to reach up and get out, only sometimes to get sucked back in.

Although it was not my shoes that was in the struggle, my heart was there with the people who had to take each day one by one, working their way to a place where the drugs were buried underneath their renewed dreams. And most impressive was knowing that the cloud of HIV still hovered over their head, yet they still saw a promised life.

One person who has inspired me is a man living with HIV and who took the steps to fight his addiction to meth.

His name is Simply Rob.

A name he goes under as he spreads his words of wisdom through the power of spoken word here in NYC. He freely talks about his past and weaves it in a poetic blanket that he shares with anyone willing to listen.

When talking real talk about his fight with meth, he brings awareness to his story as he describes an incident, one of many:

“I can think of a few instances when I should have died while I was getting high on Crystal Meth. The first being when I shot up with Crystal Meth for the first time. I felt a warm tingling sensation crawl up my left arm, into my chest and when it hit my heart I felt as if I had been kicked so hard that it knocked the wind out of me. I couldn’t breath. I remember thinking I’m going to die, then leaning back in my seat in preparation to pass on.” -Simply Rob

That first time led to a 15 year battle in addition to the 18 years of being diagnosed with HIV.

I personally don’t know what I would have done. Especially knowing that 18 years ago I was in the closet about my status. What would my addiction have looked like? How could I join a group and only give them half the story or how could I find my way to recovery when the stigma of having HIV would impede my recovery. You could say I’m one of the fortunate ones but for others they have that decision to make.

You are not alone and it bears repeating.

Like Rob there are many others who are either in this battle or in their days or years of recovery. The gift Simply Rob shares is that he’s not selfish with his recovery. By sharing his story he lets others know they’re not alone.

Right now like last year he’s preparing to run his way to sobriety. As part of the NYC Marathon he’s chosen a community agency that helped him with his battle, a place that gave him hope. He’s not only talking the talk through his poetry, but walking the walk or rather running.

I run up the subway stairs and think I’m going to die, but Simply Rob runs around the city of New York City and feels renewed. And he runs not alone, although when you’re struggling with addiction and HIV that’s how you feel, alone.

I write to inspire as does Simply Rob, but also I’m taking this time to recognize the unspoken heroes who may feel their steps have no value because of their addiction.

Addiction doesn’t always equal death, it can also mean life. You just have to run to it and not away from it.

Just Simply ask Rob!
Simply Rob NYC Marathon 2011

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