Sexual Unhealing

I didn’t want to put anyone through what I was going through. I was just trying to be responsible. Responsibility is sexy, and I didn’t realize how powerful that was until much later.

April 16, 2018 By JMV

Sex. Why does it define some of us? Sex can turn our lives upside down in just a moment; take Buffy and Angel for instance, once they had sex Angel went all crazy and evil. My relationship with sex was exactly the same except completely different.

I would wake up each day seeking to belong. I wanted to be a part of something. Once I learned about my diagnosis, I didn’t want to stop having sex, so I didn’t. I just had to be more careful, and that meant being vocal about my status.

I was always nervous to tell guys. I was ashamed. I’d chat with guys, and just before we met up, I’d drop the bomb. The embarrassment of this thing I had. I would await their response. Sometimes it led to an immediate block on an app.>

There was this one guy I found incredibly attractive, and he told me how sexy I was. We messaged back and forth for about a week. We got along so well until, “Before we meet up, I should probably let you know that I’m HIV+.

He didn’t block me. He didn’t call me gross. He still talked to me. What he did say is what made me wish he had blocked me or called me gross: “I don’t date or have sex with positive guys. Sorry.” This became an overplayed song. Do you remember in the movie Cocktail with Tom Cruise when his character, Brian Flanagan, was rejected from every Wall Street and advertising job he interviewed for? He would plead his case and try to convince the employers why he was a good fit for the position. They rejected him, so he returned to what he knew: tending bar. Well, that’s what this felt like. I went back and relied on the bars just like he did.

I felt disgust, and I felt ache in my soul. I hated myself because I have this thing living inside of me. This virus that controlled my interactions with everyone. There must’ve been something wrong with me. I wasn’t worthy of love. The term “clean” finally meant something was wrong with me. I felt dirty. I wasn’t that way at all.

This was at a time before PrEP. People were still safe-sex-only. Condoms were still trending, people still regularly carried them in their wallets.

The times I was rejected catapulted me into more long nights of drinking and meaningless sex. The amount of ignorance and rejection hurt me so deeply that I drank heavier. Bumps turned into lines that I never thought I'd cross or snort — I did it anyway.

I loved the sensation that came with a key to my nose and the false sense of self it gave me. I could stomp around, dancing into the morning and let loose. I could flirt so confidently because I was out of my head for those periods.

I'd wake up with a crusty nose, dehydrated, and the smell of vodka and champagne on my breath. There'd be that lovely drip that I could blame on allergies. I would walk down the street with friends thinking I owned the world when I was just avoiding myself.>

Those days in 2011 broke me, but today I see that the pain gave me power and that rejection is God's protection. Today, I look at those same people and I wish them the best. I was honest and I told my truth so I didn't harm anyone or myself. I didn't want to put anyone through what I was going through. I was just trying to be responsible. Responsibility is sexy, and I didn't realize how powerful that was until much later.

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