Society Made Me Feel Like a Monster. But Not Anymore!

As I approach midlife—including 27 years with HIV—I am choosing my own labels.

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If this is my time to have a midlife crisis, I am happy with the results.

There are so many things that can feel wrong in this world, but when many in society made me feel like I was a monster, I couldn't face it. I retreated into subculture and tried to find my own hidden world.

When I use the term monster it is a blanket statement concerning my own sense of belonging. There are many labels and stigmas that get handed to people, but sometimes our own insecurities can make us feel trapped in a hostile space. I was a "problem child" so I assumed that label. I was homeless as a teen, so I felt abandoned and worthless. My next label I had to digest was that I had AIDS and that people were afraid to share cups and spaces with me.

The only place I felt accepted was the land of the lost where addicts and other people who felt like misfits could socialize and where the common ground was all about self-medicating.

Trying to run away from life and feelings made me hit a bottom that I guess had to be hit to turn around and face CHANGE and new frontiers. I have heard many derogatory statements about being HIV positive, but at 51 years old I have been carrying that virus for 27 years and it is undetectable and I plan to keep it that way.

I have finally done a few things I only dreamed about, like writing a memoir, and I am in the process on becoming a social worker. I finally am investing in and loving myself. Just because I got

thrown a crappy hand of cards in the past doesn’t mean I have to keep playing the same hand over and over. And I certainly don’t have to deal with the awful hand of cards that was dealt to somebody else. In other words, if you have been mistreated by someone in the past don’t pick up where they left off.

I am choosing my own labels these days and they are complimentary, so midlife crisis, bring it on.

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