Spring Cleaning

March 26, 2013 By Aundaray Guess

Now that we have survived another winter and have shaken off DVR nights filled with bad television, it's time to get to some spring cleaning. Usually spring cleaning in my home meant getting out that bucket of soap water and doing a good scrubbing, not the light dusting kind but the down on the knees until it hurts and getting every tile on the floor until it sparkled. It also meant preparing for the warm weather by rummaging through the closet and discarding the 'what was I thinking clothes' along with packing up the cold weather coats. In this mindset I've decided to do some spring cleaning when it comes to my HIV health and have five great ways to get it done!

1. Mental Health

It's time to first see how my thought process is going and whether I need a check-up. Usually the winter can make you go through the ho-hum mood with the shorten days and the lack of sunlight along with the PTSD of the holidays we're sometimes in a funk that we can't just get out of. Recognizing the impact of depression and anxiety on one's immune system it's equally important to make sure that we're not having bouts of depression. The increased sunlight does do wonders but in no ways does it replace the value of seeing a clinician. And as I tell people in my life there ain't no shame in my game especially when it comes to my overall health. There's still a stigma in telling someone you went to see a therapist when it's one of the healthiest thing you can do. Not every encounter means you'll be prescribed pills or have to see someone for years and years. Just one to two simple visits can determine if you need intensive therapeutic support. Just like we clear the vacuum cleaner of dust we can do the same thing with our mind as we clear the dust that keeps us from being happy.

2. Bad Influences

Bad influences can be different for all and indirectly can impact how we live with HIV. For some it can be unhealthy eating habits or behaviors such as smoking, excessive drinking or dare I say too much sex especially when it gets in the way of forming true relationships? One bad influence that may benefit others is looking at the people we call friends. Sometimes the very people that have your back are often the ones holding you back from your full potential. Although we may not want to admit it the negative persona of a friend can rub off on you especially if you're hanging with someone who's always outwardly negative to others. Before you know it your friend's behavior

becomes a reflection on you. As hard as it may to do by letting go you're making room for someone who has the positive qualities you're looking for in a person. And family members shouldn't be excluded from this category. Simply because you're a blood relative doesn't mean that you have to keep them constantly in your life. Relatives can do more hurting than anyone else simply because they're family. You may have to tell them you need a break and recognize that when it comes to bad influences, your family is not allowed to do thing to you that you wouldn't let others. So whether it's your immediate or distant family, sometimes stepping away is the healthiest thing you can do.

3. Medication Adherence

As Spring rolls around for many of us our schedule changes as well. We're simply out more and don't have the same routine as we did when it was cold. With the warm weather we're out longer as we enjoy evening dinners with friends or for the lucky we're doing more traveling as we kick our heels on the sandy beaches of the tropic. This may impact your medication regime especially if you're not normally a creature of habit to begin with. Overall one should look at how their ability to take daily medication is going. This even goes for us long-termers as we sometimes get in the mindset that missing a day won't hurt but if we look back we see that we've missed quite a few days over the long winter. So just like we change the batteries in our smoke detectors lets also take a look at how we manage our medications. It's even a time to check in with your doctor and look together on how your current regimen is going. Even if your current pills are working for you, it's also a good habit to simply be aware of new developments in HIV medications.

4. Me Time

I know this may seem unnecessary but in our cleaning mode I think one of the greatest things we can do is look at the time we spend with ourselves. Although we have already started the year making resolutions, as the warm weather approaches there's value in looking at activities we love to do or simply something that we always wanted to do. Spring is a great time to clear ourselves of self doubt and introduce ourselves to new things. This could be the year of finally trying out camping or taking the outside early morning tai chi class. Maybe learning how to finally swim can be a goal or seeing if we really do have a green thumb as we take a crack at gardening. The great thing about these social events is that it gets one into new environments and for some events it may give opportunities to meet new people. Again when looking at HIV isolation is the greatest enemy and finding out whom we are and what we like to do is the greatest release.

5. Work It Out

The one thing that we can agree about winter is that it provides a back door for extra pounds to creep up on you and before you know it you're telling your scale they're a liar. I think I still have one last piece of sweet potato pie from the holidays that is clinging on my thighs. As someone who works out there's such a euphoric feel one can get from exercising. Now before one starts hitting those weights you have to make sure you're going to the gym for the right reason. If you're going

to find those six packs you see others sport on magazine covers or you're doing it to get whistles and appreciations from others then you're setting yourself up. Going to the gym is hard enough especially when you're doing it for others but the greatest joy is doing it for yourself. I personally believe that when I feel good I'm more inclined and prepared to handle my HIV health. And the coolest thing about working in the spring is that you don't need to join a gym as you have free options such as jogging, biking and my personal favorite, jumping rope. I know if no one else appreciates my hard work I take comfort in the fact that I appreciate it.

So look out world it's time to clean house and if you're not cleaning you're leaning in my way as I prepare myself for a great spring and summer. These five ways will help me transform my way into a new season and my HIV will benefit for the better!

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