The Summertime Blues

July 28, 2010 By Shawn Decker

I won't lie- this summer has been rough. I wrote about dealing with fatigue, the physical kind that can be temporarily alleviated by the occasional nap. But I haven't written about the emotional side of fatigue; namely, depression.

It's a word that comes with a lot of weight, and isn't one I use loosely. I have serious respect and empathy for anyone who deals with recurrent mental health issues because, in many ways, it is the root cause for a lot of the problems that people put band-aides on without acknowledging the emotional trigger. (Mental health issues and depression can lead to excess drinking, drugging, unsafe sex, etc.) Am I drinking and drugging and giving up condoms? No. But I have felt a little blue for about a month. Maybe longer. I don't know, I stopped counting the days of my malaise and, like most people, I kept these feelings to myself largely, only really confiding in Gwenn.

I have a wonderful life. One I wouldn't trade. I love being a writer and an HIV educator and providing laughs and inspiration to those who are already positive; I really feel like that's my purpose, and I've been fortunate to have fulfilled that goal. Hell, I found love, and have met a ton of incredible people, all because I stood up to my virus fourteen years ago and decided to attack life and let the chips fall where they may.

But part of my slump has been that I want to do *more.* I know firsthand how HIV has affected me, and am growing increasingly frustrated with how lightly regard the topic of sexual health seems to be and, every summer after the Spring semester is over (Gwenn and I speak mostly at colleges and universities) it seems like we are barely getting by. It didn't help my mood that one of the last talks of the semester was canceled- or, uh, postponed- the day before because someone at the university was uncomfortable with our presence there.

It was a costly error in judgment, not just for the students who will have to wait six months-to-never to hear the message of health- of freaking health!- but also for Gwenn and I. In that regard, despite all of my successes in reaching thousands of people through my book, talks and various media outlets, I feel like a complete failure who is unable to provide for his household. That one missed talk is the difference between getting through a summer without sweating the bills. If it weren't for a class action settlement that basically bought the townhouse we live, there is no possible way we could do what we do.

All in all, in the current state of the economy and world- I am lucky. I am loved, I am healthy against all the odds I was given so many years ago... and I am never hungry. All the basic human

needs are, and have always been, met. I am aware of this good fortunate daily, and that only makes me embarrassed for these feelings I have been harboring. I'm feeling better about everything now, but I think one of the keys to not letting this build up again is allowing myself the freedom to write about it without being worried about bumming out everyone, or being viewed as weak.

Or whatever everyone's excuse is for not talking about the natural pendulum swing of emotions that we all go through.

Back when I started blogging in 1996 I had a simple goal: to write about my life honestly and let the chips fall where they may. It's time to get back to that, if for nothing more than my own mental well-being.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

Watch, Friend and Follow me on:
YouTube, Facebook and Twitter
Website: ShawnandGwenn.com Also check out the lovely Gwenn's Fashion/Coffee Blog
Like what you've read? Then buy me an iced mocha or check out my new CD: Synthetic Division, A Symptom of Life, which is now on iTunes!

SHARE THE BLOG. NOT THE VIRUS.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.