Welcome to the Beautiful HIV-Positive Community, Jonathan

The reboot of “Queer Eye” has been a joy to watch. In his new memoir, Jonathan Van Ness reveals his HIV status.

September 21, 2019 By Shawn Decker

Jonathan Van Ness of Queer Eye has written what promises to be a revealing memoir, Over the Top: A Raw Journey to Self-Love. If pre-release articles are any indication (the book comes out on Tuesday), then he’s strapping us all in and really opening up about his life. Among the serious topics he discusses, which includes sexual abuse and substance abuse, is how devastating his HIV diagnosis was at age 25.

Publicly disclosing your status isn’t easy. I’m sympathetic to anyone who chooses to keep their status a secret, because I never thought I’d do it. Then after a decade of being diagnosed, I woke up one day at age 20 and just felt like I needed to be open about that particular aspect of my life. For celebrities, disclosing isn’t an intimate talk with loved ones: it’s a pop-up ad. Meaning, he is subject to the cruelty of strangers who have no interest in the show, him or his well-being.

Anyone who has watched the show has probably been moved to tears by Jonathan’s heart and how he connects with people who open up their lives on Queer Eye. From this point on, I’m sure I’ll be shedding even more tears, because I will be watching him through the lens that is the shared experience of living with HIV.

When Charlie Sheen disclosed his status, I got defensive of him because I knew how a lot of people would throw the community under the bus just to take cheap shots at an easy target. I also worried about Sheen’s ability to use his platform to meaningfully educate the public. It shouldn’t be the responsibility of the famous to automatically become spokespersons for such a stigmatized medical condition, but in reality that’s the case. And it’s yet another wall to scale when considering whether to open up about being positive.

With Jonathan, I have no concerns about whether he’ll be an effective and inspiring advocate for people living with HIV. Out of the gate, he’s already said that he’s “a member of the beautiful HIV-positive community.”

Like the Fab Five do on the show, let’s all give Jonathan a big, well-deserved group hug. (You can send him a hug on Twitter here.)

Positively Yours,

Shawn

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/welcome-beautiful-hiv-community-jonathan