

# ***HIV Disclosure***

By Bradford McIntyre

**WE NEED EVERYONE WHO IS HIV POSITIVE TO COME OUT IF WE ARE TO GET RID OF THE STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH HIV.**

The United Nations Population Fund has declared HIV&AIDS is a young people's disease. Individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 are infected every 14 seconds. That means a total of 6,000 people a day are being infected with HIV. Disclosure is necessary if we are going to prevent the spread of AIDS. HIV prevention methods are not working. It is up to people who are infected to disclose the fact that they have been infected with HIV.

After living in fear and having moved so far away from family and friends so no one would see me get sick or die, an extraordinary woman came into my life.

I had been living in fear and alone for 4 years. Would I spend another four years or longer, alone and waiting to die? Right then I decided to turn my life around and that was the beginning for me, the beginning of showing up for life! Without fear!

Having disclosed you are infected with HIV eliminates the dis-ease associated with hiding the fact that you are HIV positive. That means, you can feel comfortable, confident and not have fear when you disclose to a sexual partner. You're not going to have added stress, worry and guilt. If you don't disclose to a partner right away, when you do decide to tell them, they are going to ask why you didn't tell them. This is when problems arise! There may be those who are afraid and withdraw, but there are people who are not afraid and who will be there to support you. How can anyone receive the help they need if their family and friends are not aware of what is going on in their life? Many who are living with HIV are afraid to disclose, but have never disclosed to anyone! They assume that everyone will pull away. You can tell people that you're HIV+ and they not run away. There are many people living with HIV who have loving family and friends and are in relationships. My partner is not HIV+.

We have moved from a time when there was no understanding and no treatment available to where we now have a much broader understanding and treatment options. It is the people who are HIV+ without disclosure who are keeping the stigma alive and many may cause the spread of HIV!

People who are living with HIV are not asking to be different. However, the stigma attached to AIDS is still causing people to be afraid to disclose. Depending on where you live, it may be impossible for some people to disclose their HIV status. I am concerned that the reason they do not disclose, is because they are afraid. This is due to the fact that they do not feel safe! Concerned with discrimination!

Efforts to ensure safety must be a priority and efforts must be stepped up! Governments have a responsibility to educate the public and assure individuals that their rights will be protected and discrimination will not be tolerated. It must be made clear to those who do discriminate that they will be dealt with and prosecuted if necessary.

**We need everyone who is HIV positive to come out if we are to get rid of the stigma associated with HIV.**

We must recognize the reality that people who are infected with HIV are using supplements; vitamins, herbs, botanicals and tinctures in the treatment of HIV and AIDS. They are using alternative and complementary therapies that have been successful in eradicating the virus and bringing down the viral load. Many have been fortunate in reducing the viral load to undetectable. They have been able to increase the efficacy of the HIV/AIDS medications. They have been able to improve and reduce the side effects of the drugs. They have been able to boost the immune system when the medications could not.

With or without HIV medications, there ARE millions of people around the world using nutrition and alternative and complementary therapies to combat HIV and AIDS. The supplements and alternative therapies are readily available but there is a monopoly that exists among the pharmaceutical companies and the medical profession, so alternative therapies are not given their fair share of recognition in treating HIV and AIDS. To achieve this

**recognition**, we need the voices of individuals infected with HIV to stand and have their voices heard and counted. **How long will people sit on the sidelines letting others do all the work?**

I often think about the countless people, who in the beginning of this epidemic worked tirelessly to break down the barriers of fear and discrimination in their own lives as well as for the sake of others. Also, they worked successfully at preventing the spread of AIDS! Many died in the process! What would they think if they were to see that today we are still afraid to disclose HIV infection and that many continue to spread HIV?

**We need to ensure that people infected with HIV are cared for. People need proper food, clean water, sanitation and every available means to combat HIV and AIDS. I too may not live to see a time when everyone who is HIV positive is no longer concerned with confidentiality issues and is free of fear and discrimination. For as long as I can, I will continue to work at breaking down the barriers, just like those who went before me! They made it possible for me to be OUT ABOUT HIV!**

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