Jason Crum

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Leavenworth, Kansas
Living with HIV and Hepatitis B

I don't know how I contracted hepatitis B, but living with it has been a roller coaster ride. It's complicated because I have an AIDS diagnosis, with a low CD4 count of less than 100. I had hoped that I could get treatment for hepatitis B, but the window to treat it is very tiny. I also hoped that I could get Truvada for my HIV, but because of long-term exposure, I've developed nephrotoxicity (a type of kidney damage).

Recently, my doctor prescribed Pegasys (peginterferon alfa-2a). If that doesn't bring my hepatitis B viral count down from 17 million, there are no other treatments available for me. I am in the position to fight for my life through research, gathering information and getting involved in clinical trials. If I can't find something to help the hep B, I'll look for something HIV-related that might raise my CD4 count above 200. This would get me a spot on the liver transplant waiting list.

I wouldn't wish this ordeal on my worst enemy. Thank God for church and spirituality, because I don't know how I would be without the angels in heaven watching over me both day and night.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Energetic, compassionate, giving hope, love and joy to others. It's not always just about me.

What is your greatest achievement?
My greatest achievement would be that by speaking publicly, I've saved the lives of some young people

What is your greatest regret?
At one time, having relied on recreational drugs to comfort the issues inside my head. If I had only reached out to the hands available to me, I might have had a different outcome.

What keeps you up at night?
The itsy bitsy committee inside my head that decides to have a pity party; it keeps me awake until I regain control.

If you could change one thing about living with viral hepatitis, what would it be?
Nothing. What is, is what is. Just learn to deal with it.

What is the best advice you ever received?
Changing your attitude is the only way you can change your life.

What person in the viral hepatitis community do you most admire?
All who are outspoken about their struggle in this fight. We all have stories to tell, and perhaps other peoples' stories hold blessings for me.

What drives you to do what you do?
If not for myself, then do it for my fellow man, because at one time somebody did it for me

What is your motto?
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My bible

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
An eagle, because they soar through the skies with grace and strength; they remind me that God is still watching me through the eyes of an eagle.

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