

# 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 itchy 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.