



The Birchgrove

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A Mother's Story !!

Heather is a single mother of a young daughter. She formerly ran a daycare centre out of her own home. There are many important themes in Heather's piece: discrimination, secrecy, sexuality and relationships. For years, Heather told no one that she was HIV positive for fear of losing her job, friends and lovers.

Heather describes her initial overwhelming need to be seen as a healthy person. She discusses the transition from a HIV person and healthy to someone living with AIDS.

The truth is having HIV totally screwed up my sex life. The man who was my lover when I found out was absolutely supportive and wonderful. We went on this journey together to find out about AIDS and he really supported me into digging about alternative things, in not buying the doctor's diagnosis, not reading newspapers and staying away from negative stuff. He wasn't afraid of me at all. In fact, I think he should have been more afraid than he was. But it was really good for me to have someone who could make love to me and not be afraid. We started using condoms and he had no problem with condoms. It was fine. In fact we had a lot of fun with them. But for other reasons I broke up with him.

My next lover is the man I am with now. He is really difficult for me to talk about, because I didn't tell him in the beginning. I was so convinced at the point when I met him that I was perfectly healthy, that I couldn't pass the virus to him and that the HIV was nothing. This was when I was really on a roll, very confident, so I didn't tell him that I was HIV positive. I am really sorry now. I know that it was wrong of me to make that kind of decision for him, that I exposed him to the virus without him knowing about it. For him to expose himself, knowing about it is one thing. But he didn't even have the chance to say no. I wasn't on birth control, so he was very careful because he didn't want me to get pregnant. I essentially practiced safe sex with him 99 percent of the time. But there two nights when we drank, came home from a

party and screwed on the kitchen table ...

When I finally did have intercourse with him on a regular basis, condoms were our form of birth control. I just told him that this is what I used for birth control.

I told him about four months into the relationship. It was really hard and I drove myself nuts knowing that I had to tell him. How do you tell someone that you have knowingly exposed him to AIDS. When I did tell him, I fully expected him to be really angry and to run, and I was ready for that. He pulled away a bit, but mostly he was concerned about me because I was an absolute basketcase. He went to his doctor and was tested. The result came back negative. He waited four or five months and was tested again and he was still negative. So he seems okay.

Since he has known, our sex life has gone downhill. Since I've been sick it's become almost non-existent, because he's afraid of me. He is very wonderful about it, but he's honest. He can't say he is not afraid of me when he is. He has three children and a business and too much to take care of. He was in a bad marriage for nine years.

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In this newsletter, we look at the subjects of well . . . there's quite a few actually, so I would suggest you just get on and read. As time goes on, this newsletter takes longer and longer to produce, we really need more contributions from you - the people it's aimed at.

Many years ago the message was "there nothing out there for positive haemophiliacs". So Birchgrove was born, but unless we get some help! It can also die!

Let's not go along that road.