

Meet a Member - Mario's Story

My story begins several years ago when I received a diagnosis that confirmed that I was HIV positive, at the time I thought that my life was over and my already dwindling self-esteem had almost all but evaporated away. I began to lose weight, my appetite, even more self worth and I came down with what felt like a severe flu complete with muscle aches. I had no friends, or family that I could talk to about this and at the time I had no friends, or family that knew that I was gay either. The stigma of being a Gay, HIV positive man was crippling and something that could even be felt through an online IM. Which left me with the action that I had grown accustomed too, which was to struggle with the issue alone, deep inside of a closet.

With some time I came across a doctor and specialist who recommended that I start medications sooner rather than later, so I did. What many people don't know is that though medicinal marijuana helps with the symptoms of HIV, it also GREATLY helps with the side effects of the medications for the HIV. My medications not only magnified current issues like IBS, loss of appetite, insomnia, depression, anxiety (which I had also been prescribed pharmaceutical medications for like Lorazepam, Apo-Nortriptyline, Cipralex, Cymbalta are just the ones that I can remember,) but could create new issues like stomach cramps, migraines and the spins in general, but especially when I took them to close to my other medications. At one point I was taking 12-15 pills a day.

The sleeping pills had little affect on me, the anti-depressants worked for only so long before I was back at the same state of mind where I had begun and I had grown to except the pains that I would feel from my stomach as my new way of life. I stayed to myself, let go of some friends and distanced myself from my family. Constantly, I worried about getting old and how the virus and numerous medications would affect my body during the process, over working my liver and possibly leaving me as a frail and feeble being from muscle and fat wasting.

I had been smoking pot for almost a decade by this point, but never did take notice to what it was doing for me other than giving me a buzz, until I realized that I could get to sleep without my sleeping pills and with smoking some pot instead, but could not fall asleep without pot and with my sleeping pills. I eventually stopped the sleeping pills, anxiety pills and the antidepressants, leaving the entire workload to pot. After my doctor witnessed the positive changes that were occurring due to pot, including my attitude and outlook at that point, he gladly signed my papers to obtain medicinal marijuana. Though still bashful my self-esteem grew and I managed to go out and make some friends that I could talk to and supported me being openly gay and HIV positive.

I started off with just pot, but with time worked my way up to edibles, extracts and vaporizing. A bit of everything, but today I medicate on mostly edibles and extracts. It did take a while to figure out what was right for me, since everyone is different, but once I did it was well worth it. My life has the kind of quality that I had always wanted, things aren't perfect, but with my pot I'm able to overcome barriers that I once saw as mountains. I'm even greatly motivated by it to weight train that will slow, or stop the effects of the meds and virus on my body, with an added bonus of increasing my endorphins making me happier, naturally. Down to 5 pills a day and those are my HIV meds.

For anyone considering trying, or using medicinal marijuana I would it is definitely worth looking at, depending on your ailment. Many people in the community are friendly, wells of knowledge often willing to share, so becoming informed and educated can fast and fun too. Not to mention that it's much easier on the liver than the pharmaceuticals and the only negative thing that the medical/science community can say about the use of pot is the inhaling of burnt plant matter (smoke), which in today's age is 1 option of a handful of ways to indulge. Defusing that negative.

In the future it would be great if the government would recognize pot as a medicine and support people with it the way they do so many pharmaceutical narcotics. Medicating areas could be installed into society, like cigarette smoking areas but distanced away from the cigarette smoking areas and people would be allowed to grow it themselves if they pleased. Travelers could either travel with their medications, or easily pick up a new prescription during their trip. There would be factoids on tv to further help educate the population and the stigma of being a pot smoker will be long gone.

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