

Let's Stop HIV Together: Jamar Rogers

[Piano music plays]

[Jamar Rogers] I'm Jamar Rogers and I've been living with HIV for more than six years. You may know who I am from "The Voice," but I'm also one of more than a million people living with HIV in the United States. I was kind of a reckless teenager. I got into some partying and things as a teenager and became addicted to crystal meth at the age of 18. I got really sick and was rushed to the emergency room and had no idea what was going on and didn't realize at the time that I had pneumonia and Kaposi's sarcoma. I only had five "T" cells, and it's a miracle that I'm even alive today.

The first thing I would say to someone who just recently found out they were HIV positive is, one, you're not alone. Yes. You're not in this community by yourself, and you don't have to die from this. I'm a huge advocate for people living out their dreams and living out what inspires them. We were all put on this planet for a purpose, and just because you've gotten an HIV diagnosis doesn't mean that your life has to end here. If you know how to protect yourself, then you're not only protecting yourself, you're protecting any future partners you might have, you're protecting your children, but most importantly, you're protecting yourself.

I would encourage my brothers and sisters to stay as educated and connected as possible. Once we can come together to eradicate stigma, well, then, people can walk out with their heads high, and they can feel okay about themselves. Just because someone has HIV doesn't mean that they don't have the same personalities, that their feelings don't get hurt. You know, I want to let people know that it's more common than you think. It is your cousin, your neighbor, your waiter. The thing that my mom did that helped me out so much was just letting me know she would never leave my side, that she would always support me. That is the most effective help that anyone could ever receive, is just to know that you're going to be there and you're not going anywhere.

[Jamar's Mom] At first, my heart sunk. But because of his upbeat personality -- and I believe he sort of kind of became okay with it, just for that split second, to tell me. His delivery wasn't doom or gloom, "I'm gonna die." It's, "Mom, I'm going to live. Can I come and live there with you?" [Jamar laughs] My son has HIV, but that doesn't define who he is.

[Jamar & His Mom] Let's stop HIV, together.

[Jamar Rogers] Get the facts. Get tested. Get involved.