

Speaker Profile

Kahlo Benavidez **Kahlo Benavidez**



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My name is Kahlo Benavidez, I'm 20, and I live in a small city known as Las Cruces, NM. I am a sophomore studying social work at New Mexico State University.

Before finding out I was HIV positive, I was having a lot of one-time sexual encounters with people I had never met, and never planned on seeing

again. I knew that what I was doing was risky, especially since my condom use was sort of hit-or-miss. I just didn't really think of HIV as a threat, not because I didn't believe in it, but because I had never known anyone who was infected. After I tested negative following some "risky behavior", I began to feel invincible. I developed a "superman complex" that would later prove to be nothing more than a compromised coping skill meant to give me a sense of security.

I found out I am HIV positive shortly after starting school on December 17, 2004. Finding out I was positive was a reality check. It forced me to grow up a little bit. It made me stop being so petty and really help me appreciate everything I had. I was depressed for a few months. I was so disappointed in myself for being so reckless, but I refuse to be ashamed of my mistakes. I refuse to hide something that people think I should. I refuse to let others make the same mistakes I made without knowing what the consequences could be.

After telling my friends and family, I began to realize something: This was actually nothing but opportunity. My mistakes could become something that other people could learn from, and hopefully I could convince other people to make better choices than I did. I have a greater appreciation for what I have and I am grateful for my friends and family.

For today and the future, I do what I love to do; I work part-time at Camino De Vida, a HIV service center where I am a prevention specialist. By age 25 I would like to have my Masters in counseling continuing the work I do now and just enhance it to better myself and to better assist others.

In the end, that's all that life is really. Life is the sum of the choices we make, whether that choice is to use a condom, or whether that choice is to refuse to be depressed because of a rough situation. Life is about choices. We learn from not only our own experience, but from the experience of others as well.

Cheerfully,
Kahlo

A Quick Look

Age - 20 years old
Location - Las Cruces, NM
Sex - Male
Race - Latino
HIV+ since - 12/17/04