



# Creating Safe Space

Jordan J. Edwards turned his sensitivity into his superpower.

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As a Black queer man raised in a religious household in the South, I spent most of my life prioritizing being loved by others over loving myself. I felt that to be loved by my family, my community and God, I had to hide parts of myself. I was ashamed of my sensitive side, not realizing my empathy was a gift. Many men carry this same burden and fear being vulnerable.

When I began to understand my sexuality, I continued to search for love externally, and in 2013, I was diagnosed with HIV. This journey has not been easy, but it has helped me to begin to shed the pressures of living with shame or living for others. It gave space for me to start a new relationship with myself and see that I am loved, accepted and in community as my truest version of myself. Now, I create safe space and advocate for everyone to live authentically. I have turned my Achilles' heel, my sensitivity, into my superpower.



What three adjectives best describe you?

Empathetic. Vulnerable. Nonjudgmental. These traits enable me to connect deeply with others and create a safe space for sharing and healing.

What is your greatest achievement?

My work helping others find their start in the HIV field and self-empowerment. Through my own journey, I've created pathways for others to discover their passion for sexual health and personal wellness.

What is your greatest regret?

My greatest regret is not sharing my full self with my grandmother before her passing. She always advocated for my freedom, and I know she would be proud to see how I love myself and live freely.

What keeps you up at night?

The fear that I am not doing enough. HIV is still stigmatized, and there is always more to be done to create the world I want to see, where everyone is able to live proudly as their true selves.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

The issue is not the status itself, but the stigma about what being positive means. I wish for greater understanding about HIV and more inclusivity in these conversations for cis women and trans men.

What is the best advice you ever received?

"You have already disappointed them, and you probably will again, so now, what is holding you back?" Meaning we have no control of others, and we should stop living to meet their expectations of us.