



TRACEY'S JOURNAL.

9.22.11

After tons of preparing, laundry, grocery shopping, house cleaning, itineraries written out for our children's schedules and leaving handwritten notes on our childrens' beds, letting them know how special they are, leaving for over a week to attend a Florida AIDS education advisory council meeting in Orlando, Florida tomorrow. After that, it's off to Miami, Florida for a week so my husband and I can share our hearts and educate others about HIV/AIDS. I know I'll miss my kids and grandbaby tremendously, but it's a sacrifice our whole family is willing to make to hopefully alleviate some stigma, fear and ignorance that are associated with HIV/AIDS. Realized I forgot refrigerated meds, which I NEVER do. Will have them sent.

9.23.11

Up at 6:00 a.m. to get prepared for meeting this morning. The hotel is extremely nice and kinda feeling like a fish out of water. I'm much more comfortable in my blue jeans, T-shirt, and tennis shoes. Spoke to three of my children before they went to school to let them know how much I love them and to have a good school day. Meeting went well and Tim Kordic, HIV/AIDS prevention education coordinator from the Los Angeles unified school district presented on their curriculum. During lunch, he sat with me and a couple other council members and told us he was getting on a plane to go back to California for a fund raising event. As he was sharing, I about fell out of my chair as he said Magic Johnson was going to be here! I laughed and told him I have two goals before I leave this earth, 1) to meet Magic Johnson and 2) to go to Africa, hold AIDS babies and encourage those infected. I asked him if I gave him one of my business cards if he'd give it to Magic Johnson. He said he'd be glad to, so Tim, my husband, also went to get one of our T-shirts—white, with Straight From the Heart of Florida logo on it. So...next best thing to meeting him! Tonight, Magic Johnson, will have our card and a shirt. Absolutely amazing! Left meeting around 4:00 p.m. to head to Hollywood, Florida to speak at an oncology and nursing society conference tomorrow for three different counties. I thought the last hotel was something, but this one is astounding.

9.24.11

Up and at it early – 6:00 a.m. Ironed clothes to speak in (for a hotel of this caliber, 5- star, ironed leaked water). Made it through, Tim went downstairs to meeting room before me to do sound check of DVD we use during our presentation. People all around us were using bellhops....we're more comfortable pulling/pushing our own luggage. Made lots of friends and received many positive comments. Left for Davie, Florida to stay with friends for the week. Confirmed meds had arrived after I forgot them. Grateful to have friends to house us, as we don't get paid nor receive grant funding for speaking and sharing.

9.25.11

Went to church this a.m. with our friends. Guess what the message was about? Being the hands and feet of Jesus. Was the church's 30-year celebration, so made new friends, networked with pastors about our program and saw some old friends, as we have spoken here before. After church, went tennis shoe shopping, as the bottom of mine came apart. Rested some to get ready for a crazy, good and productive week. Also shopped for Ty's B-day. The cologne was a hit and he loved it. Got to witness that 16-year-old go on a treasure hunt (with 16 clues of course) to end up opening the microwave to find an engraved iPad 2. I told him I was coming to HIS house, for MY birthday! LOL. Our three kids at home are doing okay, Taylor – our youngest (age 12) is crying. She misses us. Her daddy suggested she get one of his T-shirts, wear it to bed and sleep in our bed or his side (hard to be away, when this happens).

9.26.11

Hectic but productive day as we spoke at two different schools in the Miami area. Even staff of nursing students were attentive and shared with us later, they thoroughly enjoyed our program. Wanted to redirect us to others. What a blessing to be used in a powerful way and...we got LOTS of hugs.

9.27.11

Spent a full day at a school educating hundreds. Tonight we spoke to parents of students we'll educate on Friday. Talked to my kids this morning to wish them a happy day. Now I'm really missing them. I realize we have a purpose though, and our whole family is willing to sacrifice to educate others (even if it takes mom and dad being away). Lesley, our infected daughter wasn't feeling well and went to the doctor. Today she's had herpes simplex on her lip, now strep throat, her hair continues to fall out and she's lost five pounds. At only 5'1" tall and 120 pounds to begin with, NOW the virus once again is motivating me to do as much as I can to provide education, hope to alleviate the stigma, fear and ignorance associated with HIV/AIDS.

9.28.11

Another busy day, educating and sharing with hundreds. Tonight we educated a roomful of parents we had educated today. Still missing my kids. Lesley started antibiotic yesterday and is already feeling better. However, I keep hearing her say "momma...I used to be so pretty." Makes my heart so sad, and I'm so far away from her. Instead of heading home Saturday, Tim and I have decided to leave after our three programs on Friday. I think Lesley will be starting back on her HIV meds as she also stated she wants to be around for her daughter's 5th and 10th birthdays among other things. The sad part and truth of the matter is that SHE has to WANT to take her meds. I can't shove them down her throat anymore like I used to when she was 4 and 5 years old.

9.29.11

Didn't sleep well last night thinking of Lesley, but spoke to the kids again to wish them a happy day. They had fun at church last night. (So happy I've instilled the gift of faith in them). I also try to do this to all we share with. From the aspect of...we're all humans have made a bad choice or decision, in our lives, but like with HIV/AIDS...there is ALWAYS HOPE! Today was very productive speaking to hundreds, but I'm ready to see my babies tomorrow.

9.30.11

Woke up feeling very excited to be educating and heading home. Our three kids that live at home will be at a lock-in with youth group at church, so we'll be stopping by Lesley, Abe and Gabriella's before going home (this is my daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter), when I saw Lesley she was feeling better, but she looks very thin. My guilt surfaced, as she was infected due to a very bad choice I made over 26 years ago. She promises me she's been taking her meds, but if this is true, I can't help but wonder...for how long.

10.1.11

Now time for a total family day! Picked the kids up at church at 7:30 a.m. from lock-in. Taylor slept 'til 11:00 a.m. to get ready to cheer at her game. I made her breakfast in bed, with a rose on her tray. Her sweet smile and dimple made it all worthwhile. Timmy got a shower, went right to bed and Casey stayed up a while, then crashed. Pulled Taylor after performing at halftime so she could get some rest before her homecoming dance tonight. We stopped to get body glitter and I assured her she was my princess and she'll be the prettiest one there.

10.2.11

So good to be home and back to our home church. It never takes long to get right back into the home routine. Overall, I love my life because I don't let HIV rule me, I choose to live my life to the fullest...having HIV."

10.3.11

Up at 5:15 a.m. as most weekdays to get Casey up for school. After Timmy and Taylor left for school at 7:50, I left to meet my mom at the hospital as she had her right knee replaced. Spirits were up and I shared more with her about our trip to Miami and about our book proposal, which looks like we'll be doing a 50-plus city book signing tour. Whoever thought just sharing our hearts and doing education would be so productive. Sometimes I feel somewhat selfish because I get so much out of sharing and the encouragement I get from others after sharing is my confirmation I'm on the right track, and I'm doing what is greatly needed.

10.4.11

Got up and did my mom duties, by cleaning the house and making a nice dinner for my family. Today I did a program for a boy's facility. It's always so interesting to listen to first responses as they file in to hear the program. Then...as I'm sharing...smirks and smiles, sometimes turn to tears and words of encouragement to me, as the barriers of stigma, fear and ignorance start to break down. So honored to be used in a positive way. The hugs they give me in the end are priceless and the stories they share with me break my heart.

10.5.11

Early morning as usual. Up at 5:20 a.m. Thankfully, I have been given another day. As most of my days, I plan on giving it my all and trying to make a positive difference, hoping others can learn from my mistakes. Les, Gabriella, and I returned to a facility Tim and I had gone to. Thought it would be interesting to have them meet Lesley and Gabriella after hearing their stories, how hard of a time she had growing up as an infected teen, then finding out she was pregnant at a time in her life, she was sicker than ever. I think they were a little intimidated by her, as they were certainly more quiet this a.m., than they were when Tim and I were there.

10.6.11

Another busy day. Two programs educating others. Never ceases to amaze me the misconceptions that still exist after decades of HIV. As usual, one of the biggest misconceptions is that since there are so many medications available today, people tend to think it's not a big deal anymore. However, they fail to learn about side effects of some of them, as well as the fact, even though a lot of these drugs are showing promise, we don't know what long-term side effects are. Maybe one day, education will not be needed as HIV will be no more. That thought makes my heart happy.

10.7.11

Today was very emotional. After speaking to the young ladies at the Hillsborough County Girl's Academy, tears followed and I feel some healing began on several levels. Some of the girls shared their personal stories, some of what had happened to them, of infected family members, and now their willingness to open up and share. Even the ones I thought who weren't listening, or glaring, were the first ones to hug me. Some stood back, waiting for a hug as tears welled up

in their eyes, and tears streamed down their cheeks. I left feeling so heavy hearted, as our young people today have so much more to deal with growing up than ever before. However, I share that I realize they are our up and coming future, and without them...we are absolutely NOTHING! That's why we need them making good, wise, healthy choices. And it's the choices they are making today, in the here and now, that CAN and WILL affect their future. As I left them, I assured them they'd stay in my heart forever.

10.8.11

Wet and rainy today but at McDonalds by 6:00 a.m. for Taylor's cheer competition. As I left, Tim was getting up. He looks very tired. Hope he's taking his meds. It's only one pill, once a day. Doctor told me if he says he can't take it, it's probably a psychological thing, as side effects are near none. What makes me so mad is that if something happens to him, once again, I'm the one left to pick up the pieces. Having to be strong, deal with the heartbreak of the kids, handle things financially, and try to move forward. Overall I'm a very positive person but HIV/AIDS seems to bring out the worst in me. How DARE a virus mess with the well being of our family. NOT only ours, but countless numbers of others. It makes me extra angry though when people choose not to take their meds that are available. Years ago, there was none,...then there was 1-A2T...now with so many options, there is no reason not to try an option to hopefully keep from getting sick or sicker. It's a different story when people take them and they don't work. Not only do I have to try and stay healthy myself, but keep the "healthy" ones healthy as well, so we don't get really sick. Competition got canceled, due to rain. Even though Taylor isn't infected, while most of her squad stood in the rain under umbrellas, we went to the van and played "Uno." Bonding time for her and I. As I hear her laughter, see the sparkle in her eyes, and watch her "dimple dance" I know all that could change if anything happens to her daddy or sister. She's daddy's little princess, even though teenage years are creeping up in months and there is NOBODY like her sissy!

10.9.11

Exciting day! Competition for the Lakeland Gators, but there is rain, rain and more rain. Woke up several times through the morning, afraid I wouldn't get up at 4:30. Let Taylor sleep some, as she's all packed and uniform laid out. Van is decorated from inside (since raining) and bows tied outside (orange and blue of course). After leaving McDonalds, had breakfast and prayed, got to competition field where it down poured. Most of the girls stayed outside under umbrellas, but Taylor and I went back to the van and played Uno. Can't take a chance of Taylor getting sick, as that would increase the chances of everyone else getting sick as well.

10.10.11

I am the face AND voice of HIV...all around me is pain, heartache, and destruction caused by these three little letters. I am and can be the voice of the hopeless, the voice of pain, the voice of the ridicule, and the list goes on and on. I AM the voice.

10.11.11

Thinking...love is patient, love is kind. There is NO ROOM for HIV. Yet it has a tendency to weasel its way into so many people's lives. So many have heard of love, but often times at the mention of HIV, it is totally forgotten about. Love and HIV/AIDS should coexist, but often is majorly separated. Until the day I die, I will work towards educating others about this virus and alleviating the stigma, fear, and ignorance that so often accompanies it. Sharing the bad choices I made, can hopefully make a lasting influence in someone else's life.

10.12.11

After church, one of the senior high girls shared a recent choice she had made, and knows in her heart, she needs to be tested. Breaks my heart, but feel honored she shared it with me. I have shared my story, hoping it could benefit them. Once again, "the monster" has surfaced. If only people would take HIV seriously. For myself – H.I.V. has a new meaning...H – happily, I – involved, V – victoriously I will NOT let HIV overrule my life, simply because it's part of my life.

10.13.11

Today I choose to just be a wife, a mom, and grandma. Forget the HIV label.

10.14.11

Feeling a bit down today. Tried to call our mentor, but he must be out of the country. Seems like the harder Tim works, the further we get behind. It still looks like he's losing weight. This virus makes me so angry. Usually when people mess up and make mistakes, you get a second chance. Not so with HIV. Once infected...always infected. Many don't even understand the concept that "nobody deserves this virus."

10.15.11

Very busy day! Thankfully Lesley and Abe, my daughter and son-in-law, were available to help. Tim and I spoke at a conference. Our time kept getting pushed back, ended up we were the last to share, so after starting in a.m. was wondering if anyone would stick around in late afternoon. The opposite happened from what I initially expected. Not only did people stick around, but people stopped in the hallway and headed indoors to listen to us and our message. Made some great contacts for future speaking engagements. Through tears, I shared my heart, educating others so they left with a better understanding of HIV/AIDS, but also giving them a glimpse of living a life with.

10.16.11

Ready to see my senior high girls tonight at church. People today have so many issues to deal with, not only for others' safety, but their own. After hearing about their lives and issues, my heart is breaking. One will be tested on Tuesday – hoping one stupid mistake didn't change her life forever.

10.17.11

Today was a little challenging. It seems like days are never long enough. Every day life in HIV = Sobering experiences.

10.18.11

Twenty-six years ago, I gave birth to my first son, which left me totally ELATED! Nine months later I was given my diagnosis, which left me feeling totally humiliated. Looking back, I can't believe it has been so long since those words rang out that changed my life forever. So many lives have been infected and affected by this virus. Some have moved on, and others of us have survived. I am on a mission...and on a mission until the day I leave this earth.

10.19.11

My face...represents LOVE.
My face...represents HOPE.
My face...represents SORROW.
My face...represents EQUALITY.
My face...represents A MOM.
My face...represents A WIFE.
My face...represents A GRANDMA.
And my face represents...H.I.V.

10.20.11

Today I wore my smile as I met with my son's staff to view and talk about his IEP school plan. I also wore my face of H.I.V. Some know, while others don't. As public as our family is, there are still so many that don't have a clue. If all we encounter new, I always wonder if we'd be treated the same. LIVES > HIV.

10.21.11

For those NOT infected: Life is challenging enough without adding HIV to the mix.

For those that ARE infected: There is ALWAYS hope.

I've had HIV for so long, I've forgotten what life was like before it, to some degree. I'm now very excited, though, to have been chosen for "the faces of HIV" project. We must keep this in the forefront so everyone knows how serious it can be, and that it can happen to ANYONE. I deeply respect those that are diligently working to bring about projects like these. We must keep the communication open...as I truly believe education is our best defense against this virus.

10.22.11

This morning I put on my "cheer mom" hat as I took our daughter to her football game to cheer. This is a time I love...just being a mom and forgetting the label of HIV. After the game, reality hits and H.I.V. looms once again. Makes me wonder how many more games I'll be around to see. But then again...does anyone ever really know? H.I.V. positive or not? This virus has definitely given me a new perspective.

1. Treat others the way I want to be treated.
2. Don't be judgmental.
3. Live life to the fullest (in a healthy way).
4. And it's true...live...laugh...and love.

10.23.11

I want to share my story. My story of hope, love, compassion and H.I.V. Looks like we are getting closer with our book and "the faces of H.I.V." project. Society needs to continue to stand up and be heard in regard to HIV/AIDS. I believe we've come a long way, but have a long way to go. How are YOU going to help? The journey has been long, but it's always more productive and pleasant traveling with others. Nobody should travel the road alone. HIV can be a lonely trip by one's self, but together our journey can be less fearful.

10.24.11

Twenty years. Twenty years ago I gave birth to my second son. Never thought I'd live to see the day he grew into a man. I'm so grateful for the life I've lived and AM living! Even though each day is ended with the reminder of HIV, (by taking my meds) I'm mindful of the gift I've been given by having lived that day...hoping to see tomorrow. Then wondering, what can I do to positively impact someone else?

10.25.11

Today I choose to be me. No matter what obstacles or challenges present themselves. I've learned life is what you make it, with or without HIV. Knowing your status helps you pick and chose which path you take. I often reflect on the fact that I've been given a second chance at life. What am I and what are you going to do to make a lasting impression when we're no longer here?

The face of HIV/AIDS is:

Black, white,
young, old,
gay, straight,
male and female.

We could simply ask ourselves which "category" we fall into? Yet, bottom line, we are All humans. INfected or Affected...we are ALL HUMANS.

10.26.11

Feeling rejuvenated today! So excited about the faces of HIV project. Potential to reach thousands and to keep this virus in the forefront of society. Helping others is like a shot of adrenaline for me. A thought just crossed my mind:

"Looking into my heart and into my eyes...am I the face...of HIV?" I am looking forward to a very fun and productive day! This makes me smile and a smile to me makes my heart happy.



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