

## Eduardo Luiz Barbosa, 44

**In the early 1990s**, I was working in São Paulo as a schoolteacher. I used to have sexual relations without using condoms, thinking that my partners, because of their personal characteristics, were immune to the infection. Also, I lived my homosexuality clandestinely. Then, in 1994, I had health problems. Since I was not given a clear diagnosis, I took an HIV test but remained in denial even after the results showed I was positive. But my secret was out and I became the target of discrimination and verbal abuse. Fortunately, when I told my parents the truth, they showed great acceptance despite their fears.

**An important stabilizing factor** in my life has been the GIV (Life Incentive Group of São Paulo), an NGO directed by and aimed at assisting people with HIV/AIDS. I found other HIV-positive people and realized that I am not alone, and that it is possible to have a good quality of life in spite of being seropositive. We support each other emotionally and find strength together.

**In 2001, I was elected president** of the State Forum of AIDS NGOs in São Paulo and became a political activist. I now head the Unit responsible for Civil Society and Human Rights in the Ministry of Health. I am developing strategies to address discrimination and prejudice in cooperation with at-risk segments of the population. My work allows me to be a reference for people living with HIV. Today, I lead a normal life, in spite of my treatment's side effects. I try to avoid being victimized, and I believe that we could all contribute a lot if we stopped being passive before adversity.

**HIV +**



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