

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Drug abuse and HIV: "It was easy to ignore that little voice in my head."



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While partying with cocaine, "Jason" made bad choices about sex. Now he is living with HIV. (This story is based on the experiences of real people whose names have been changed.)



For me, cocaine was a part of partying. I'd do a line in the club bathroom. Then, I'd feel confident—in charge—sexy. I could chat up anyone I wanted. I wasn't just that shy kid anymore.

A lot of people there were looking to hook up. So was I. On coke, it was easy to ignore that little voice in my head. You know, the one that's like, "Hey! Bad idea!"

Sometimes, I wouldn't bother with a condom. I'm not sure exactly when I got HIV, but it was a real wake-up call when my test came back positive.

When I went to see the HIV doctor, he asked if I had any drug history. I decided

to be honest and told him about my cocaine use. He told me firmly that I had to stop. I was more likely to have risky sex when I was high, and I might give the virus to others. Also, I needed to do everything I could to stay healthy while living with HIV, and using cocaine would make things worse.

It was all so overwhelming. I had started taking cocaine to feel more confident. Now here I was, with a real health crisis, and feeling terrible about myself. Right then and there, my doctor got on the phone with the substance abuse treatment hotline. He got referrals to substance abuse treatment counselors that work specifically with HIV-positive patients.

The counseling has helped me deal with my feelings. I understand now why I turned to cocaine to feel better about myself. I'm doing well on the HIV meds now. But I'd rather not have to deal with this, that's for sure.

Learn more: Why did Jason make poor decisions while on cocaine? Read about [cocaine's effects on the brain](#).