**THE DIAGNOSIS OF HIV CHANGED MY LIFE- DENIS’S STORY OF HOPE**

It was December 2017 after Christmas when Denis and his family received the devastating news that changed their lives, forever. After Denis’s son was hospitalized, the 3-month-old baby was given several tests to determine the cause.

"*I remember it like it was yesterday*," Denis said, recalling the nervous nurse who came into the hospital room with results from the tests.

"*Your son came out positive for* [*HIV*](https://www.today.com/popculture/positive-author-debunks-myths-common-myths-about-hiv-1D80232324) *and Malaria, as parents you need to get tested too*." said the nurse.

Denis was 30 years old by then living with his wife and a 3-month-old baby. The two parents had tests done as advised and the results were positive. The diagnosis was a wake-up call that they needed to change their lives.

"*It was just like a punch in the stomach*," Denis narrates. " We *didn’t know much about the virus and we thought, it was too late to live longer."*

Denis, now at 33, did not believe that they had contracted HIV since they were all faithful to each other. Frightened as they waited in the hospital room, they immediately thought of their baby boy, who was to start treatment at his age for the rest of his life.

The nurse assured them that irrespective of the fact that HIV infection rates were still increasing, antiretroviral ( ARV) medications work very well and saves lives and when people living with HIV (PLHIV) take them well and follow the doctors’ advice and instructions, they can live healthy lives. What once was thought as a death sentence can be treated. The nurse then referred them to Alive Medical Services for further assistance.

With so much confusion, disagreements, blames, Denis, and his wife separated after three months of treatment, leaving him and their son on their own. With the help of his mother, Denis along with health workers from Alive Medical Services, has been able to find treatment, care, and support combined with love and dignity.

Ever since Denis and his son were diagnosed [three years ago](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/8203052/ns/health-aids/t/more-million-americans-living-hiv/#.WiGLG-srLGg), there's been incredible progress in their health and lives. New cocktails of HIV can keep patients healthy and work so well that patients who have access to the drugs can expect [almost the same life expectancy](https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/smoking-more-likely-kill-hiv-patients-virus-n677656) as those uninfected.

"The stigma is still high," he said. "When I am working, I hear a lot of negative murmurs about HIV, but I have seen the possibilities of treatment and long life with HIV."

Denis knows that the medication they take is not a cure and that they will need to stay on a healthy path so that they get to see more of the future together.

"Being diagnosed with HIV literally saved my life," said Denis. "I felt it was a second chance in life, I think the HIV virus made me stronger."

