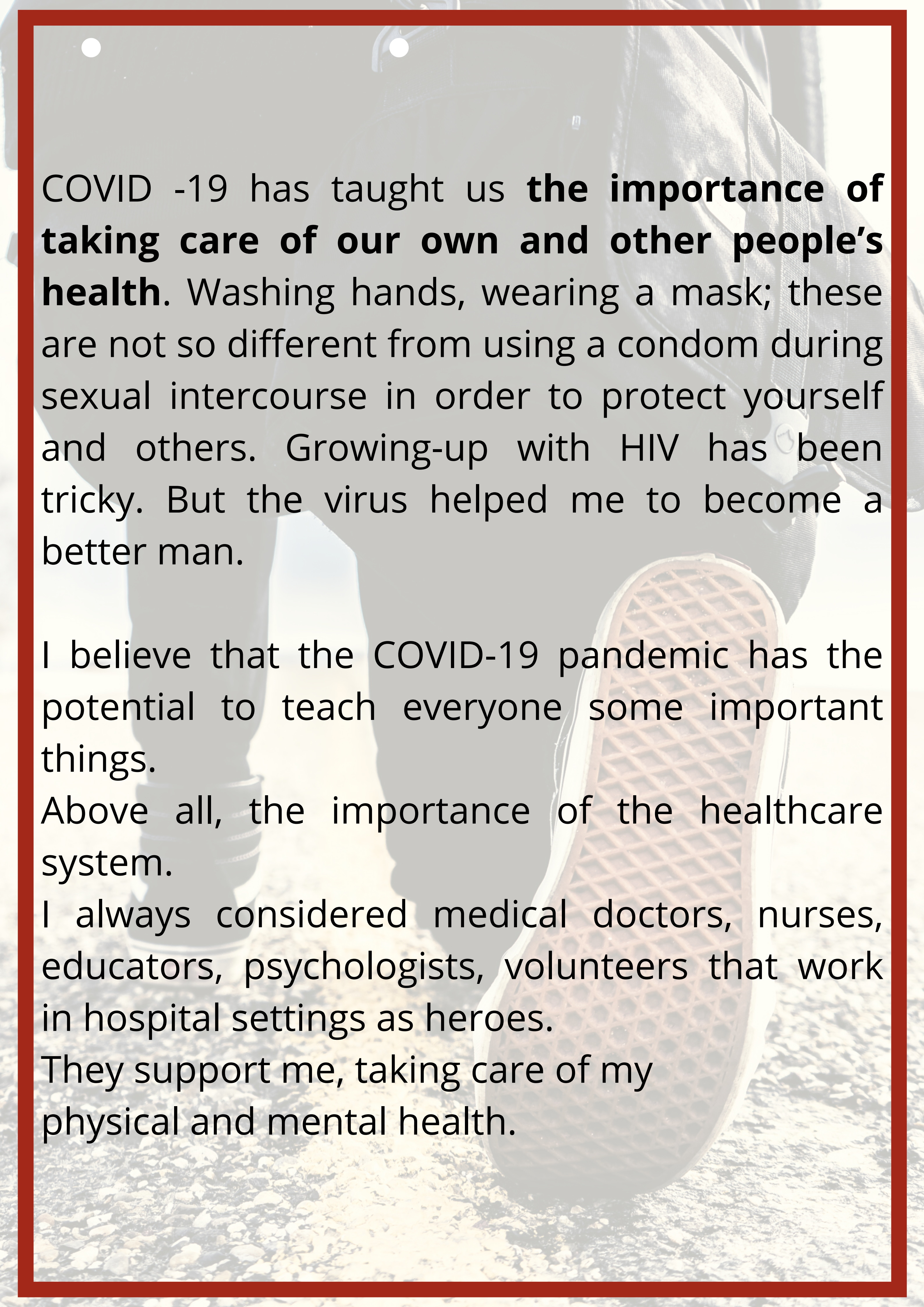


Yes, I'm positive!

Not for Coronavirus but for HIV. Since I was born, 24 years ago. I think HIV and COVID-19 are not so different. First of all, they're both viruses, and in some cases fatal.

Like COVID-19, HIV forces you **to change your way of living**. It is easy to experience anxiety or depression, because you have to deal with an invisible enemy that oblige you to stay on your own. You can't run away from your deepest thoughts.

When the lockdown was announced I did not feel so scared. I have been used to social distancing since I was born as **being HIV-infected often leads to feelings of being alone**, and distancing from others. We are now required to wear a face mask because of the current pandemic. However, I have worn a virtual mask since I was a child. It protects me from the scarce knowledge people have on HIV, making them unaware that my infection does not define me: there is a lot more to me than this! I wear my mask as I don't feel so self-confident. I wear it to hide my emotions.



COVID -19 has taught us **the importance of taking care of our own and other people's health**. Washing hands, wearing a mask; these are not so different from using a condom during sexual intercourse in order to protect yourself and others. Growing-up with HIV has been tricky. But the virus helped me to become a better man.

I believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to teach everyone some important things.

Above all, the importance of the healthcare system.

I always considered medical doctors, nurses, educators, psychologists, volunteers that work in hospital settings as heroes.

They support me, taking care of my physical and mental health.