23 October 2015: Breaching society's code

October 23, 2015 By David Pieper

Living in a society means living within society's rules, but sometimes seeking pleasure or intimacy or even just a bit of fun, leads us outside the rules of society. For those of us who have acquired hepatitis C through injecting drug use (even once 20 years ago) or sexual practices, this is something we understand very well. Implicitly we have thumbed our nose at society's code of conduct and often we pay a heavy price for that. But rather than being demonised for breaking the rules, I believe we should be should be championed for challenging the rules in a way that moves society forward.

I come from a cultural tradition that places the emphasis on being a good person, more so than following rules. And one that prompts me to judge my own behaviour rather than invite the judgement of others. Consequently I have always seen society's code of conduct as guiding principles rather than hard and fast rules. Obviously this has got me into quite a bit of trouble over the years, particularly from those who see things differently.

Surprisingly, I've noticed that a veil of respectability has come over me since beginning treatment. No longer am I a person with a communicable disease and a questionable past, but a "patient", deserving of sympathy and support. And because I am being treated, I am somehow doing the "right thing" by everyone else in society. Well guess what - it's not about how society judges me, it's about how I judge myself! I don't mean to sound ungrateful for all the support I have received, and I am not. But quite frankly, I am not a bad person and I am not about to apologise for my past conduct, including the conduct that led me to acquiring hepatitis C.

I am proud of the fact that I am one of those people that challenges the rules of society and in my own little way, stimulates debate in the hope of creating a better, more open, accepting society. Among other things, I want to see an end to the war on drugs, a greater understanding of the root causes of addiction, better education on prevention and more rehab facilities. I want to see everyone with hep C get treated and I want a world free of hepatitis C. But right now I just want to get rid of my hepatitis C so I can continue the fight.

The opinions expressed above are mine alone and not necessarily those of my employer

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.