

Coming Out: Our Own Stories

Revelations of a 14-year-old Lesbian

I always wish I didn't have to keep the real me hidden in the mountains, or in the closet, as people say. I can never write about how I feel without someone thinking I'm crazy, perverted, or sick. I can live with the crazy part, since I am a little off the wall at times and because I know no one is normal, but perverted and sick? No, I can't live with that.

I don't know how to explain how I knew I was a lesbian at age eight. I know it's kind of young, too young to even think about such a topic or even know what it means, but I seemed to know the meaning and a lot about it.

I could try to explain how a person finally realizes that he or she is gay, but it's like trying to explain how a person knows he or she is heterosexual. I can tell you how it was, and still is, for me. Instead of turning my head when a cute guy walked by, my head would follow any girl I thought was beautiful. I knew I could never ask any girl out because my chances of another girl being gay were one in ten.

Sometimes I think heterosexuals have it easier finding someone to fall in love with. Gays and lesbians have to be careful and heterosexuals don't really have to. Heterosexuals can flirt with almost anyone, but gays and lesbians can't. We end up looking at everyone carefully and wearing buttons, pins, and jewelry that makes us known to each other, or the world's largest "silent minority," as we call ourselves. When you bring it all down to it, there is no specific course you go through - well, except for finally admitting it to yourself and saying "Yes, I am."

For going on seven years I've heard people say "Being that way has got to be so hard" or "That's disgusting and abnormal behavior" or "Get away from me." In some

ways it is hard to be a gay or lesbian; it depends mostly on where you live. If you live in a small town where not many people are gay, then it's harder than living in a big city where it would be more likely to find acceptance.

The part about "disgusting and abnormal behavior" - well, getting used to kissing and hugging your own sex is a little hard, but it's not abnormal. It takes a while to get used to feeling comfortable with anyone, and someone of your own sex is no exception. It does make you feel a little afraid at first, but it's because you're not used to seeing it in society, in everyday life.

Your mind is set on one type of behavior, and what you normally see is what you call normal.

When people say "Get away from me" - that hurts anyone, even after you've heard it a thousand times. I still don't know why people are afraid of us. It's not like we would rape anyone in math or lit class.

Being gay doesn't make you any different from anyone else in some ways; you're still human. Being gay isn't disgusting, either; it's two people falling in love, and if love is a crime, then I think everyone has broken the law at one point or another.

Isolation

by Miki Thomas

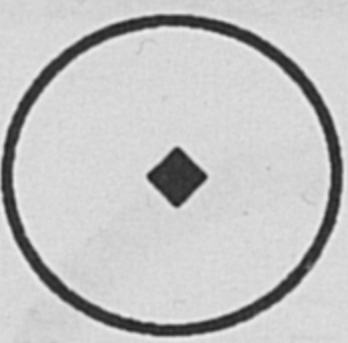
Nearly twenty people gather in a room for a meeting. The group is diverse, ranging from the most effeminate men to the most masculine women to those ranging somewhere in between. They are different yet they all share one thing in common: they are gay.

I belong to this group. It is the one time of the week where I could be totally open about myself, to fully express the feelings of frustration and joy of being gay with others of like orientation. For the rest of the week, I'm back in the closet: isolated, unable to express myself.

Being who I am affects how I relate to my family and friends. I sometimes find it hard to trust people, to let people into my psyche without the fear of being rejected and hurt, so at times I keep quiet, only letting a selected few into my world. When I did come out to people, the results ranged from tension to tolerance, and in the process I broke out of the sphere of isolation and become more my own person.

I came out to my mother one month before my fifteenth birthday. I did not come out right to her face or hear what she would say. Instead, I slipped a letter into her purse. I was scared to come out, but I was sick of playing sweet little teeny-bopper. I knew I was different, always had been. I had a crush on Helen Reddy when all the other second grade girls had crushes on Donny Osmond. I got jealous when my female friends started playing with the boys.

My mother eventually read the letter, but her response was not forthcoming. However, she finally confronted me and told me that I was too young to really know what I was, that this may be a phase. I tried to explain to her that this wasn't a phase, that I actually did have feelings for other females that were stronger than any I had for males. She then hit me with the Religious Argument. "Homosexuality is not 'normal,'" she said, "because God made men and women to have babies and therefore homosexuality was a sin." I countered
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