

Coming Out

Recent Episode

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about my former lover, and tried to explain why I'd waited so long to tell them. I asked for reassurance that they still cared about me, and said that I would interpret silence as rejection.

The responses came by return mail, and though the words were different, the sentiments were the same. One friend said, "I am so moved and honored by your confidence. Our friendship is only strengthened, not by what you said, but by the fact that you would share it with us."

Another said, "I feel very touched that you've finally felt safe enough with me to explain who you are. I just wish we had been closer and safer sooner."

A third friend told me, "Our friendship goes back a long way - 25 years or so. To me you are my friend. That hasn't changed in 25 years and I can't see that it ever will."

And from the fourth: "I felt sad, or sorry, to think you might have worried that it would affect our friendship. Along with that feeling, I feel a deep respect for you that you've worked so hard to understand yourself and have come to respect and honor your feelings."

I read these letters and felt very much loved. Though only time will fully heal the hurt of the break-up, these expressions of acceptance and caring have shortened and eased the process immeasurably.

It is a very great gift to be loved for who you are, and it is impossible to receive this gift when you are closeted. I'm happy to know that some good has come from this break-up - these friendships are stronger and more solid now because they are now based on openness and honesty.

One of the unexpected benefits of coming out has been feeling confirmed in my lesbian identity. Oh, I can still change my mind if I want to, but as time passes, it becomes less and less likely that I will. I realized this summer that as a result of coming out over the past four years, I finally feel like a real lesbian, not someone just going through the motions because she couldn't get excited about men.

Now that I no longer waste so much time and energy pretending, now that I present essentially the same self to my gay, lesbian, and straight friends, now that my double life has almost vanished, I find myself free to love being a lesbian because that's who I am.

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