



**OMG I'M  
QUEER**



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***COMING OUT AS  
AS SAME GENDER  
ATTRACTED OR  
GENDER DIVERSE  
DOESN'T HAVE  
TO BE AN  
OMG THING.***

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# sexuality and gender.

Alice Chesworth

**Our identity is made up of a HEAP of different traits that are personal to us. Things like our sexuality, culture, religion, gender, our age, our body, and a stack more.**

**The great thing about our identity is that it's ours to decide. No one else can tell you how to identify, because it's who you are.**

One of these traits is **Sexuality**, which is who we are attracted to. This could mean romantically (who you love) or sexually (who you want to kiss or be physical with).

We use labels to describe absolutely everything in our lives; it's basic English. So it shouldn't be a big shock when we try to put labels on our sexuality as well. Common labels like lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, straight and pansexual all describe a person's sexuality.

Sometimes when we choose a label for our sexuality, other people have certain expectations about what it means. If you're a gay guy, then people might automatically assume you love to gossip about Arianna Grande and sneeze glitter and rainbow flags. Which is totally cool if you do! But that's not *because* you're gay, you just happen to do those things while also being gay.

**Our Sex** is our physical body, like what genitals we have, or our level of hormones. Generally when we're born, the doctor will write a sex on your birth certificate based on these.

**Gender identity** on the other hand, is our sense of self when it comes to masculine or feminine. Basically, it's how we feel. For a lot of people, gender identity will match their sex, and this is called being cisgender.

When our gender identity doesn't match the sex we were assigned at birth, words that might describe this are transgender (e.g. being

assigned male at birth, but identifying as a woman).

Some people identify with aspects of male and female and feel they are in between or a mix of the two, while others feel like they are another gender altogether. Words like 'non-binary' or 'gender diverse' can describe these identities.

For gender diverse people, what they call themselves is very personal and entirely up to them. Using different pronouns (like 'he', 'she', 'they' etc) is just one way gender identity can be expressed.

**Identity is fluid** and can change over time.

This applied to all parts of our identity. As we grow, and as our experiences evolve, it's pretty common for our sexuality and gender too as well.

The word **Queer** is an umbrella term, basically to mean lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) and anyone else within the community.

Finding umbrella terms for a community as diverse as ours isn't easy (trust us - we know). Over the last fifty years or so, we've cycled through a great deal of them. The 'gay community' became the 'gay and lesbian community', then the 'LGBT community', and then the 'LGBTIQ community', and so on.

Since my sexuality is fluid, I find that queer can describe my own sexuality as it shifts, and there's not really any pressure to describe what that means. Basically, I like dudes and dudettes, I sometimes feel like a dude or a dudette too and queer captures it.

What you label your sexuality or gender, it's completely up to you; it's the word that YOU feel suits you best. Embrace it!





# aretha brown.

Micah Scott

**Aretha Brown is a 16 year old indigenous activist. I asked to meet up with her to talk about her work, and she took me to a rooftop above a market in her home suburb.**

**This place is awesome, why'd you bring us up here?**

When I come here it's just everything in abundance and full of diversity and life. The people are weirder, and I kind of relate to that. I come up to the rooftop and I like to write. Usually it's just school work and I'll just read books. It's my favourite place to work.

**What are you working on at the moment?**

I'm going to Canberra 'cause there's an indigenous youth parliament and they want me to say a speech. I'm talking about drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres for indigenous youth and I'm doing that all next week.

I'm also involved in AIMS, an indigenous mentoring services which offers tutoring - I'm being tutored at the moment - and eventually I'll become the tutor, and it's a whole cycle which I think is really cool.

**Is there something others struggle to understand about you?**

People are often taken back by my confidence. I do have all the trappings of a marginalised person, y'know - gay, Aboriginal, woman - and people almost act surprised that I'm so confident. They expect me to be something else which I just want to blow away. I think it comes from a place of assumptions and there's a lot of bigotry in assumptions; I don't need to tell the LGBTIQ community that.

**What can others do to break those down?**

People are talking about us rather than to us. So in creating allies - and I say this in both indigenous politics and being part of the LGBTIQ community - you just literally have to sit down, shut the f- up, and listen. That's it. Once we start listening to people from within communities - things like compassion, respect, understanding - that stuff will follow.

**On the flip side, what's pride mean to you?**

The term within the Aboriginal community and the LGBTIQ community I feel are two different things but also two very similar things. Both communities have been ostracised and told you're not allowed to have pride in who you are. Being Aboriginal and also being gay, it's something for me that doubles up.

Sometimes pride can be twice as hard, but at the same time, it can be twice as empowering.

**Where does that all fit in within your own identities?**

Identity has always been a big topic for me, especially as an Aboriginal person, because it's something that I've always kind of learned to shun. I honestly think it's more important to be politically conscious than to have an identity at this point. My identity will catch up with me.

Like who am I? I don't want to get all philosophical but in the big run the only way that change has ever happened in the world ever is by a movement of people. You can argue that some individuals have sparked it, but at the end of the day it's by committed groups of people and so while I think identity is important, it's not defining for me.

**Cool outlook, what is it you want to change in the world then?**

I need to pass Year 11 Maths first - ha! Okay. I know that I was put on this planet to help my Aboriginal brothers and sisters out and if I can factor in my sexuality and those who identify as being gay and bi and lesbian and trans as well - that would just be the coolest thing ever. I also feel like in these communities that are so used to being at the forefront of discrimination you are either forced to be one of two things. You are made to be a token or you can be an exception (meaning your lifetime trauma is disregarded - and that's horrible). I want to change that.

I'm not a prop. I'm not a box to be ticked. I'm just Aretha Brown in the moment.

# tips for coming out.

Jye Kurz

You've made the leap of faith and decided to finally let some people in on the fact that maybe, JUST MAYBE, you're a little bit queer - awesome work, high fives all round. The awesome thing though is that there are thousands of other people right across Australia who have gone through it too. It's one of the most common topics we're asked about, so here are our tips for coming out.

## Make Sure You're Ready

Ask yourself - am I ready to come out? Chances are if you're reading this then the answer's probably 'uh, yeah!' If you're still a bit unsure though, remember that there is absolutely no rush and it's OK to not come out. Whether or not to come out is your decision to make. There are some questions you can ask yourself if you're still unsure:

- Is this something I would like to do right now?
- Is it safe for me to come out?
- Do I have any support?

## It's OK To Change Your Mind

Your identity is your own, and coming out is a continuous process. If you're unsure about your sexuality or gender identity, it's OK to say "Hey - I'm gay" and later on update people that you're actually bisexual or queer.

Bonus tip - you don't have to pick a label at all. If you're a guy who's into other guys, you don't have to choose between labels like 'gay', 'bi' or 'queer'. You can tell people that you're still working it out, or shrug it off when people want to guess.

## Find Support If You Can

Telling the first person can sometimes be the biggest step, but having a friend, family member or teacher who can be there for you can make things heaps easier.

Talking through your experiences and having someone who can stick up for you when needed makes any situation better. It's also amazing to have that person to bounce ideas off and to celebrate with when things go well.

## Test the Waters

You can sometimes test a person's reaction by bringing up a topic on sexuality or gender with someone first. Seeing their reaction to LGBTIQ news, media or celebrities can give you an insight into those topics without outing yourself first.

Did you see that Coca Cola ad on TV where the brother and sister both fight over a guy? I thought it was cool that Coke showed a gay person like that. Or, have you seen Orange Is The New Black? Isn't it awesome that they have an out transgender actress? It doesn't have to be in person, you could link to this sort of thing on social media as well.

## Write it out

Face to face conversations can be intimidating and finding the right words isn't always easy. Taking the time to write letters or emails that convey exactly what you want to express and how you feel can help take some of the pressure off. You can use this as a way of guiding the way you come out, or you can even give them the written letter.

## It's New For Other People Too

While you've had a while to figure out your identity and what it means, for the person you've just come out to, it's likely all new information. It's nice to show them patience if they don't understand right away. They'll likely have questions for you - which you may or may not want to answer. If you don't feel up to answering their questions, providing links or resources for them where they can read up themselves can be really helpful.

## If Things Don't Go Great

We can't promise you that it'll go exactly as you want, so it's useful to have a plan in case they don't. Having a backup plan (like being able to stay at a friend's house if there's tension at home, or having a sibling who can talk to your parents) can help make the process a little less daunting. Hopefully you won't need it! But having it can give you peace of mind.

Remember to reach out if you need help. There's a bunch of people you can talk to for extra support, and you can check them all out at the back of this booklet. Good luck!





# a guide to self care.

Jazz Sayed

**Let's get real - sometimes life gets tough. Us queers can face extra challenges at home, school, in friendships and life in general. Coming out, exam stress, family dramas and friendships can all add up and place pressure on our mental health and wellbeing. Having ways to work through these challenges, and knowing when to reach out for support makes a world of difference.**

**I've learned a lot through my own challenges, and from my time volunteering at Minus18, so I wanted to share some tips to make it easier for you to take care of YOU.**

## **Find Community and Support**

Having other people who can help you is great! If you're part of a group of people working on the same project, in the same youth group or class, or even in an online community, you can all support each other. When one person is getting a little overwhelmed it means someone else can step in and help them out.

Just having other people who understand what you're going through and care helps heaps and bouncing off others is extremely validating.

## **Get Involved In A Cause You Believe In**

Investing our time and personal energy into something we feel passionate about can feel great, and connect us with others who share our values. Knowing that you are contributing and actively making the world a better place also feels pretty fantastic.

Adding extra work can at times be a bit draining, so it's important to not over commit and to know your limits. An hour a week or fortnight doing something fun that you love can go a long way in making you feel good.

It can take on a whole bunch of different forms - as simple as putting up posters around your school, starting a Stand Out Group or a Queer-Straight Alliance, volunteering at an organisation like Minus18 <3 or even starting a campaign yourself or with friends.

## **Be Realistic About Your Workload**

Try not to place too much pressure on yourself, and know what your limits are. You'll likely want to reduce your activities during high stress times, like exams, and this should always be OK as long as you communicate it to others. If you put your hand up for a task that you

don't have time for, it means the task won't get done, and you might also be stopping someone else from putting their hand up too.

## **Take Active Breaks**

I used to feel sooo guilty when I took a break, like I was being lazy or letting other people down. But taking breaks, even if it's just for a day, is one of the most important ways to take care of yourself. Giving yourself time to relax is good for your mental health and means you'll have more energy and drive to do the things you need to get done. If you take care of yourself, you'll also be better positioned to help others out as well.

But what *is* an active break? For me, while I love to stay in bed and watch netflix, I know doing that too much can make me feel disconnected and a bit lonely, so I only do it in small doses. When I ride my bike, spend time with friends, go for walks and spend time in the sun, I always feel recharged and positive. What works for you might be different.

Having a regular sleeping pattern, and getting involved in relaxation activities like yoga or long baths are a few other things that might work for you!

## **Reframe Your Tasks and Workload**

If you can't take a break, try reframing the tasks that seem like stressful obstacles or too overwhelming to think about. If you have an exceptionally busy week, make a list of all your tasks, assign them to a day, and approach each day as it comes. These bite-sized workloads will seem much easier to manage, and it feels real good to tick them off your list and celebrate your achievement, even if it's small.

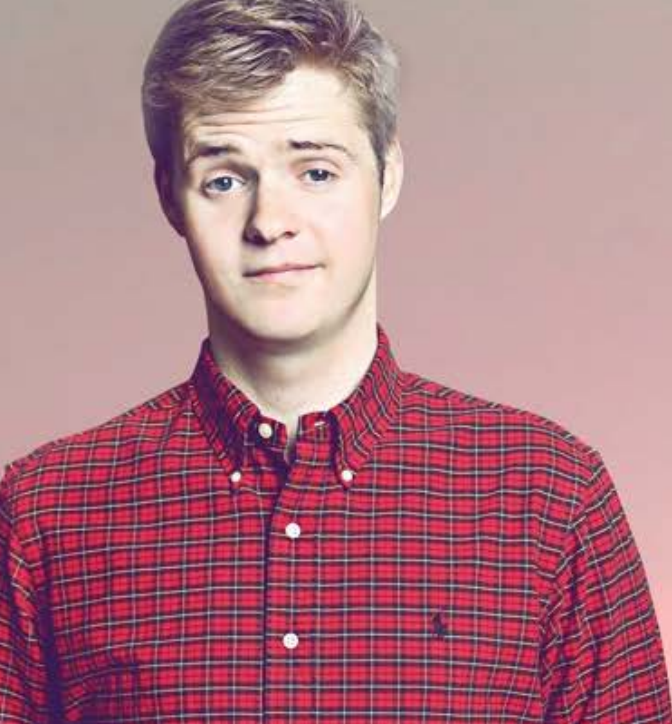
## **Practice self care often**

Everyone has different needs, and what works for you may not work for someone else. When you work out what makes you feel positive, keep at it! Try to do it as often as you can, and not just when you're feeling negative or stressed.

## **It's OK To Ask For Help**

If what you're doing isn't working, remember to reach out for help - whether from friends, family, school wellbeing coordinators, or a mental health professional. There are a bunch of places you can reach out to in the back of this booklet. We ALL need to ask for help, and the sooner you do, the better it'll feel.





## COMEDIAN AND MINUS18 AMBASSADOR TOM BALLARD IS PRETTY QUEER.

**It's pretty amazing how good you can become at fooling yourself, after a while.**

You hear people talking about how everyone goes through a phase of thinking about others of the same sex. It's just normal and it happens to everyone. That's puberty for you; you are so keen to get involved in SOMETHING.

Sure, I found myself becoming emotionally and sexually attracted to some of my best friends and tried desperately to perceive their platonic friendship as something more, and sure, I was on a regular basis thinking about the idea of having sex with guys and I had little to no interest in girly lady girls... but surely I wasn't gay???

Only gay people were gay.

I think it was in Year 10 when I really started to notice it. I was a pretty chubby kid, very academic, hopeless at sport and, perhaps, unsurprisingly, never been kissed. Pretty much all of my mates went along to discos and music gigs and had 'pashed' or 'picked up' the females of their choice, proudly bragging after the fact around school about their prowess.

I convinced myself that I was better than these callous thugs. I just hadn't met the right girl. When I had my first kiss, I wanted it to be special, just like in the movies, with heaps good emotions and Dashboard Confessional playing in the background and stuff.

In the meantime, I took the time to admire my fellow young men in the school change-rooms and to listen intently at sleepovers when we all talked about jacking off and to fantasize about a handsome prince riding into Warrnambool on the back of a mighty steed to take me away from it all, so that we may live together happily in some magical, mystical, faraway place like Melbourne.

Growing up in a regional, footy-loving place like Warrnambool, I was pretty regularly given the message that gay = bad. Heck, just being a little bit different in any way was often frowned upon. Goths, emos, theatre enthusiasts, fat kids, ugly kids, poor kids – they all had a hard time trying to get by in the patriarchal monoculture that is high school. But at least they were acknowledged as existing. I clearly remember that the very idea of being anything but straight being seen as ridiculous, really. The word 'gay' became synonymous with 'shit', and every time I heard one of my best friends casually spit out the word to describe a test or a song or a piece of clothing, or call one another 'poofa' or 'faggot' as if it was the worst possible insult, I winced, and the pressure inside me just went up a notch or two.

I felt alone for quite a long time. I was supposed to be the smart, busy guy who did lots of things and did them pretty well and wasn't any trouble. I'd always been fine, I took care of myself, I couldn't really picture me asking anyone for help. Plus I'd had so many conversations with people about the girls I, er... "liked". How could I go back on that? Did I want to be a gay liar? Is THAT what I wanted?!

Finally, it all just became too much and it was evident to me that this was my lot. I was a homosexual, a poofa, a faggot, a queer, a woolly woof, a shirtlifter, a fudge-packer (though I didn't actually know what that involved, exactly). I was gay. At the end of my Year 12 year, I wrote a letter to my cousin Lucy and poured my heart out to her. I remember crying as I wrote the words down, overwhelmed with fear and sadness and relief. It was one of the toughest things I've ever had to do.

Luckily, Lucy was lovely. She told me that she didn't love me for my sexuality, she just loved me for the person I am. As did my mum and my dad and my brother Gavin and my best friends Jeremy and Daniel and Caleb and Zacc and Liam and David and Luke and Michael and Alex and everyone else, and my other cousins and my aunties and uncles, all of them coming to the table and accepting me for who I am: a big ol' fairy.

I've been extremely lucky. But perhaps my story is a testament to the way things are changing for people who are same sex attracted or genderqueer. The world is getting better and there are amazing role models out there and there is no reason – absolutely no reason – why being something other than heterosexual should stop you doing anything you want to do, as Oscar Wilde and Graham Chapman and kd lang and John Gielgud and Bob Brown and Elton John and Missy Higgins and David Marr and Freddie Mercury and Simon Amstell and Harvey Milk and so many others have proved.

I love my life as an openly proud, gay man. I get to talk on the radio and do comedy and travel the country and the world and go on TV sometimes and make people laugh. I'm not a gay comedian; I'm just a comedian who happens to be gay. If I make someone laugh, they don't give a damn if I fancy guys or girls; they just like me the way I am.

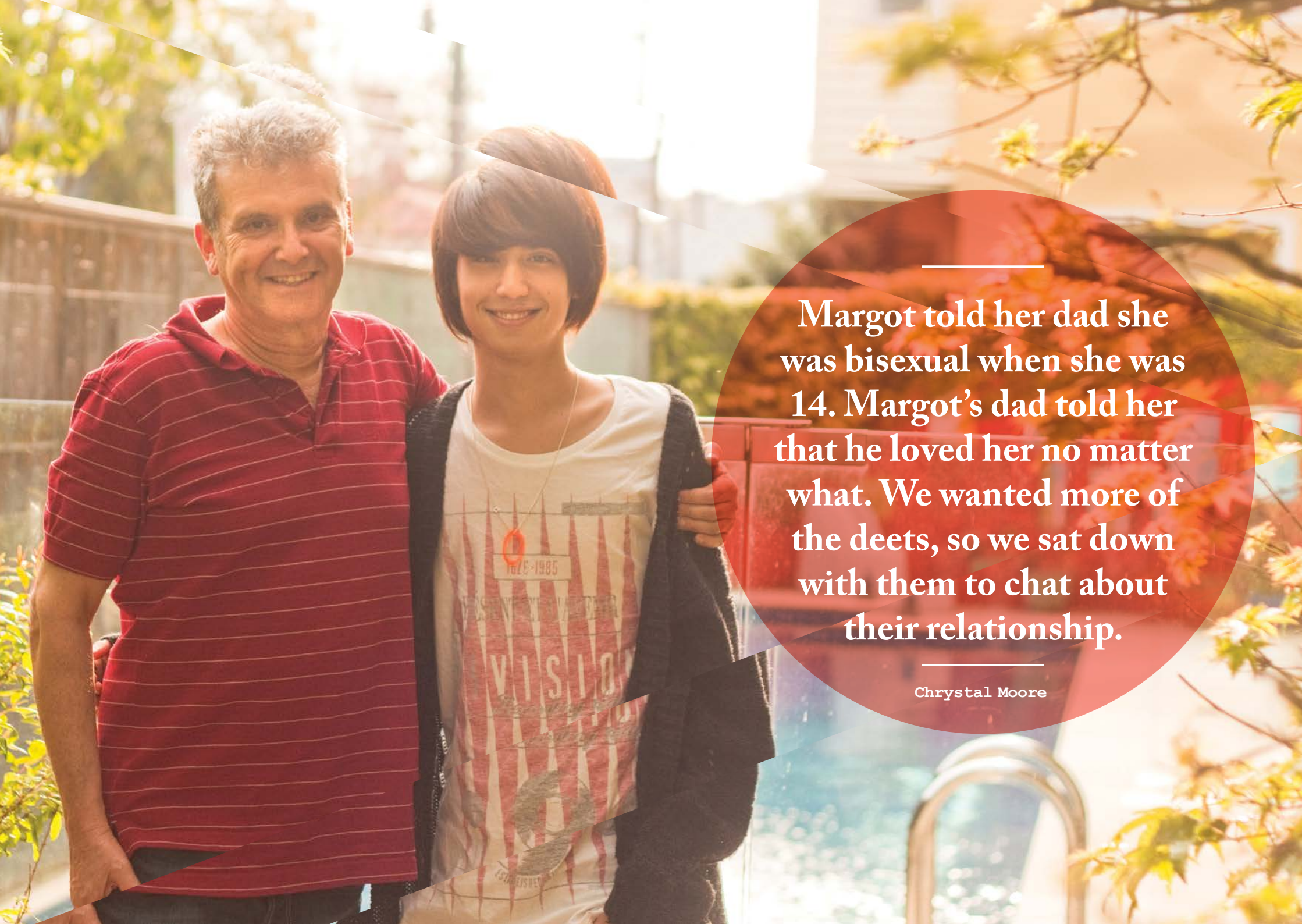
And honestly, if someone judges you or dismisses you or belittles you because of your sexual orientation or gender identity, they are, quite simply, not worth knowing. They are on the wrong side of history and if you ask me, you don't need 'em.

Whether you think you might be gay, lesbian, straight, bi, transgender, intersex or just queer in some way, you are beautiful and you are important and, best of all, you are alive. And that is a stupendous thing that needs to be celebrated, every single day.

Coming out was tough for me. For some people it's a lot tougher, for others it's easier, for some people it's a non-event. I wouldn't change who I am or what I went through for the world, because it is all fundamental to the guy I am today. And, while that guy should eat less cheese and be nicer to some people and read more books and not steal his housemates' milk all the time, he is, I think, on the whole, a pretty good person.

Even if he is a bender.





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**Margot told her dad she was bisexual when she was 14. Margot's dad told her that he loved her no matter what. We wanted more of the deets, so we sat down with them to chat about their relationship.**

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Chrystal Moore



### What's your family background?

**Dad:** OK there's four of us in the family; mum, dad, and two daughters. Culture wise; my wife comes from Malaysia and I was born in Israel and came here when I was five. So it's a bit of a fruit salad of a family.

**Margot:** We are pretty crazy as a family, especially the extended family; they are really full on, but very fun! We have more to do with mum's side of the family, because dad's side are a bit older.

### How would you guys describe your relationship?

**Dad:** Well I think it's pretty good, we have always been close. It's loving, she has been a pretty good kid. We tell each other "I love you", stuff like that. We go on a lot of family holidays. We are all supportive of each other. I once got pulled up for speeding when Margot was a little kid, and I got a \$200 fine (I was really upset), and Margot (eight years old at the time) had savings of I'm not sure how much but she offered them to me to pay the fine. She is always very supportive of me and I support her. We support both our kids. It's a good relationship.

**Margot:** Dad is supportive of me whether it's a late assignment, me running for class president or kids picking on me; dad's always there offering me advice. He helps me however he can.

### What was it like when Margot came out?

**Dad:** I was surprised at first, but then I took a few days to think it through. At the end of the day she is still the same kid I've always loved and it really didn't matter. She is still the same person, whatever her preferences are... well they're her preferences. I can't help what I prefer and Margot can't help what she prefers, it's just how you're made up. I would never hold that against her. She is a good kid, studies well and doesn't give me too much of a hard time... most of the time [chuckles]. I love her and in the end she is a good person.

**Margot:** Umm, I was very nervous and anxious. At first I was down about it because even though mum and dad were trying their best there was still tension. I'd had years to think about this, it had been on my mind for quite a while. I'd had the time to come to terms with it, but mum and dad had to deal with the idea kind of out of the blue. It was like I came out of the closet and they went in. But now they have come a long way, they are really good and really accepting. If anyone was to be homophobic towards me, my parents would be the first ones to jump up and defend me.

### Did you feel that there were any conflicts with religious and cultural beliefs, because of Margot coming out?

**Dad:** Religiously we go to a synagogue which is a Jewish place of worship. It's a reformed or a progressive one where being gay is accepted.

### And Margot; you feel comfortable in that environment?

**Margot:** Yeah, they are very warm and very good. Although amongst the community there I have never openly announced that I am bisexual, but at school (which is a Jewish school) everyone's pretty good about it and the staff are accepting and understanding.

### How important is that to you?

**Margot:** It really does mean a lot, initially there were a few kids who weren't so nice. They grew out of it and were apologetic later on.

### What was it like for the rest of the family when Margot came out?

**Dad:** For my wife and me it took us a few days to come to terms with it. I think I spoke to Margot's sister once about it and she seemed fine with it. We haven't made a big deal out of it. Is that right Margot?

**Margot:** Yeah, things have been good, Sophie (Margot's sister) was the first person to be like "yeah whatever, I wish mum and dad

would chill out a bit", because at that stage it was very early on and my parents were anxious for me. Her reaction was really nice and reassuring for me.

**Dad:** I think our biggest concern was that Margot was already a part of minorities being Jewish, part Asian and then to be a part of another minority "bisexual". Life can be more difficult, and that really concerned us. Her safety was our biggest worry.

### In what ways has your relationship changed?

**Dad:** I don't think it really has changed, it was just adjusting. You know you think your kids are going to grow up get married, have kids and so I just had to adjust to the fact that that may not happen. Big family occasions... how's that going to go down? At the end of the day I love her.

**Margot:** Not very much, we still talk, hang out...really the only difference is now when we talk about guys and girls. Talking about relationships, last year I had a bad break up and dad was good with it. I needed someone to talk to and he was really good with it.

### Has coming out changed you?

**Margot:** When I was younger I was shy, I was never the outgoing kid. Since I came out and meeting people especially at Minus18, my confidence has grown and I have come out of my shell. I'm a lot happier and a lot louder [chuckles].

### Have you seen those changes in Margot?

**Dad:** She has matured, she was shy. In her reports it used to say "it would be good if she interacted more", since coming out she is now more of a leader. She was house captain a couple of years ago and class captain another year.

**Margot:** I've gone from someone who tried to stay out of the spotlight to wanting to be in it. At school there was an art show I was involved in and one of the pieces was me in drag. That in itself was a big thing for me and for the school. Everyone loved it.

**Dad:** They all asked who the person was. [laughs]

### Do you feel Margot experienced any form of bullying?

**Dad:** The kids at school are comfortable with her, she is popular. Unless there are instances I'm not aware of?

**Margot:** Nah, the only cases are the people at school were uncomfortable with it. As time went on they grew out of it, but I actually still felt a bit awkward going out to a swim centre or change rooms. I didn't want to make them uncomfortable. But now I'm fine in that environment.

### Margot's an active member of Minus18 do you know much about it?

**Dad:** I know what she has told me, and it's good.

**Margot:** Mum and dad have met a lot of the people and really like them. They are proud of the work I have done, especially on Stand Out. The only complaint from them is "don't neglect your homework!".

### How has being involved with other queer young people helped you?

**Margot:** Again being so quiet it was amazing to go to a events where there were these outrageous and outgoing people. I went with a friend to my first one, it was great seeing all these people going nuts and having fun in costume. So I enjoy working with Minus18 and attending the events.

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# what does it mean to be asexual?

Jasper Clarke

You might have heard the word asexual (or even aromantic, and grey-aromantic) before. These are all some of the terms that people in the **Ace community** have come up with to describe our different levels of sexual and romantic attraction.

Broadly speaking, **Sexual Attraction** refers to the level (or no level) of sexual interest or desire we have for another person. This could mean wanting to cuddle or make out with someone, be intimate with them, being aroused by them or not feeling those feelings at all. Someone who doesn't experience any sexual attraction might identify as **asexual**.

**Romantic Attraction** refers to the level of romantic interest we have for another person. Things like wanting to date someone, feeling emotional attraction and wanting to say "I like you" or "I love you". Someone who doesn't experience any romantic attraction might identify as **aromantic**.

Your sexual attraction and your romantic attraction don't always line up, and can be completely different from one another. So you might be romantically attracted to all genders, but only sexually attracted to the same gender.

Or you might not be sexually attracted to anyone, but still live a life with beautiful, loving romantic relationships.

Sometimes there are extra conditions on who we are attracted to. So you might only be sexually attracted to someone who you have an emotional or romantic connection with.

The great thing about the word 'asexual' is that it more accurately allows us to define our romantic experiences (or lack of!) in a community that can focus a lot on sexuality.

## The Ace Community

We use the term **Ace** as an umbrella term to describe identities where someone doesn't or

rarely experiences sexual or romantic attraction or only experiences it under limited situations. This includes people who are asexual and aromantic.

Remember that we're talking about what attraction someone does or doesn't experience, not necessarily their actions.

## Is Asexuality the same as abstinence?

Nup! Asexuality isn't the same as abstinence.

Abstinence when you make the choice not to have sex, regardless of whether you're sexually attracted to anyone or not. A lot of the time people choose to abstain from sex because they have a lot of desire for it, or for religious reasons too.

Asexuality is a lack of sexual desire or attraction, regardless of whether you have sex or not.

Asexual people can have a range of attitudes towards sex. Some don't want anything to do with sex and others might enjoy it or feel indifferent towards it.

## Is it a phase?

Like all identities, someone's sexual attractions and romantic attractions are fluid and can change over time. That said, a lot of ace people continue to identify this way their whole lives. Regardless of how someone feels in the future, the important thing to note is that they're feeling this way now - and that's awesome and should be embraced.

## Why do we talk about it?

We live in a world that places a lot of value on sexual and romantic attraction. If we don't feel these attraction we can feel different and sometimes we can feel like there's something wrong with us.

The awesome thing about the Ace identities is that you know you're not alone, and you're perfectly normal. There are others who feel the exact same way as you do!





# COMING OUT CAN BE FREAKIN SCARY.

LUCKY YOU'RE NOT ALONE, EH?

## Ashleigh Lesbian, 16

A couple of years ago I told my older brother I'm a lesbian. Given that we're pretty close and I can talk to him about anything, I figured he'd be pretty relaxed about it. One afternoon at Southland, we were looking through calendars in a gift shop and I absent mindedly murmured "that girl is really hot".

My brother laughed and said, "you know what? it wouldn't surprise me if you were gay". I think I blushed harder than I ever have. Turning to him I said, "well yeah... I sort of am". I was completely terrified, shaking, and waiting for him to say something. He just grabbed me, gave me the most amazing hug, and grinned; "At least I don't have to beat up your boyfriends".

## Katrina Pansexual, 18

I've always been pretty open about my sexuality. In fact, ever since I was 12, I knew I wasn't straight. I chose to answer people honestly if they ever asked, and it never felt like a really big deal. When I was 16, I felt I had fully come to terms with my sexuality, and felt the term pansexual really described how I felt.

After the cake was cut on my Grandma's 80th birthday and most of the family had left her party, I was helping her wash the dishes, and casually asked "so, did you hear some of the states in America just allowed gay marriage?". Without blinking, she replied, "oh good! I wish they had have realised same sex love is natural a few years earlier, your Uncle Bob was jailed for it, and Auntie Jess was institutionalised," she said.

I was pretty shocked - definitely not the reply I was expecting! "Well I guess that makes me feel more comfortable telling you I'm not straight," I admitted, looking at her. "Oh thank God!" she chuckled. "I'd hate for you to grow up to be a homophobe."

## Jules Gay, 16

When I came out at school, I hadn't really planned it. I had just attended my first Minus18 event, and a video was posted online, and I thought I'd share it on Facebook. Awkwardly, I was in the video and almost everyone one of my classmates commented on it, "wow! You're gay, you're actually gay. Faggot." and other cruel things like that. It was too late to take it back, so I just embraced it. I deleted the status, changed my 'interested in' on my account, and went to school. There wasn't a single person at school that wasn't talking about it, it was the best goss since one of the teachers left the school two weeks after starting. I lost a lot of friends that week, but I also discovered who my real friends were. They were the ones that stuck up for me.

As clichéd as it sounds, that was one of the best weeks of my school life; I stopped lying to my closest friends, and started to be myself. It was like a fresh start and I could finally really be me.

## Maddy Lesbian, 21

The hardest part about coming out for me was figuring out what to say to other people. Every time I came out to someone new I tried to make it seem as casual as possible, sliding it into conversation somehow. I'd spend weeks coming up with ways to turn conversations onto the right topic and planning out answers to things they might say.

One thing I can remember was when we did issues lessons in English on same-sex marriage or equal rights. I'd try and bring that up in conversation after class. Or when talk about relationships came up, I'd try to subtly mention the possibility of having a girlfriend. I remember coming out to one person when she was talking about how hot Johnny Depp was and I just said something like "yeah, I'm not really the best person to ask."

When I came out there were mixed reactions: some of my friends pulled away from me almost immediately, which sucked pretty hard. When I came out to my sister, though, I got the last reaction I'd ever expected.



She just laughed, which was followed with “You really thought I didn’t know?”. I realised maybe I wasn’t hiding it as well as I thought.

Coming out to mum was a fair bit more difficult. I’d lie in bed at night gripped with fear that she’d freak out, would get angry or be disgusted, and I’d be short one happy home. After all that stress and all that worry, it was almost a letdown when all she said was “I know.” Apparently my family knows me better than I do, and the fact that they love me despite that is amazing.

## Scott Bisexual, 17

I came out to my family when I was in year 9. I’d recently started a relationship with my first boyfriend and we’d been hanging out every chance we had. My parents had begun to find it strange how much time I wanted to spend with my new ‘friend’, but didn’t question it. One day, we were sitting in my room together, cuddling on my bed. Suddenly the door starts to open and the two of us jumped back from one another. Mum walked in just as we flew to opposite sides of the bed. The penny finally dropped, and mum awkwardly stuttered “I-It’s alright Scott, you don’t- it’s okay” and closed the door. Awkward. I was a bit shaken and avoided her for the rest of the day. Eventually, Mum confronted me and asked what was going on. At first I was reluctant to talk about it and tried to dismiss it, but eventually told her I was bi. The next morning Dad knocked on my door, he sat on my bed and said “Mum told me about last night”. I cautiously asked “Are you okay with it?”. Dad was silent for a while, then suddenly responded “Scott, you like boys and girls, I like Asian women. Neither of us can help that, it’s just who we are”.

## Rebecca Transgender, 16

I’d been talking to a friend about being transgender for a few months and had come to terms with the fact that, while born a girl, I wanted to be physically male.

Although I’d often casually talk about it with him, I wasn’t ready to tell everyone yet, especially not my best friend. She’s always been a good, supportive person, but she comes from a traditional family and I wasn’t really sure how she’d take it. During our school ski camp, some of the

girls decided to give me a ‘makeover’- I reluctantly agreed, and they gathered around me, applying makeup, doing my hair, and changing my clothes. It was a pretty overwhelming experience for me, and before they could finish I ran and hid. I burst into tears, and couldn’t stop.

I hated feeling trapped and pressured by the girls, being dressed up to look womanly made me feel bulky and disgusting. Eventually my best friend found me. She tried to comfort me, but couldn’t understand why I was so upset. Suddenly I didn’t care anymore, I told her that I wanted to be male and waited for her anger or rejection. Instead she was calm and kind. Smiling, she said “I figured as much, I’ve noticed how you’ve been trying to look less feminine, you could have told me.” I don’t think I could have asked for a better reaction.

## Camden Gay, 17

Around 13 I found myself noticing other guys. I hated it, and every time I found myself drifting off into some deep lustful trance I would feel dirty afterwards. Somehow I managed to convince myself that everything would be alright and I’d revert back to “normal” and forget the entire experience. Looking back, how I managed to do this for two years is beyond even me. By the time I hit about 15 I realised I had to accept myself for who I am. Over a few months, I did a lot of looking online, eventually realising it wasn’t all that bad. But that didn’t prevent me from being scared beyond belief of anyone finding out!

Eventually I reached the point where I was bursting to tell someone, anyone. Luckily one of my friends had recently come out, and having him to talk to made things so much smoother. Sure, some people were completely shocked and didn’t quite know how to react, but others were completely ecstatic about it. Within the one day it seemed I’d told everyone I knew.

It takes more than just courage to come out; it takes time and a fair bit of mental preparation. But the reality is, you can never be truly prepared. Although some of the people I told weren’t that great about it, in the long run it showed their true colours. Now I know who my real friends are, I can be open about myself and it’s been amazing ever since.

## Ace Bisexual, 19

I had my first ever crush on a girl in grade six. It was totally new and exciting and something I’d never felt before. It wasn’t until grade 7 that I realised that I liked girls, and only girls. I developed pretty strong feelings for one of the girls in my class, and I felt shattered on the weekends and school holidays, because I couldn’t be near her. Funnily enough, it wasn’t until sometime afterwards, when I was sitting in my room one night when it just hit me. Bam! I realised I’m bisexual.

Telling my mum was a gradual process over a couple of months. I remember going for long car trips with her, and I’d drop hints. I’d say stuff like “I don’t really feel comfortable when I date guys” or “Dating guys feels weird to me. I haven’t really liked a guy yet”. Sometimes I’d make comments like “that lady is so pretty”, hoping that she would take the hint.

Finally being honest about my sexuality was the hardest thing ever. It was really emotional and I had to hold back tears. Mum and Dad had always said to me that they’d love me no matter my sexuality; I still couldn’t help but be worried though.

At 16, I wrote a note to mum, gave it to her, and walked away crying. Mum followed after me and gave me a huge hug. The weight of the world came off my shoulders. That same night, I told my dad. He gave me a “who cares?” attitude, so that was kind of cool.

A few months later I told my sister while watching TV. While she was accepting, she told me about her gay friend getting bullied at school, and she was worried that the same thing would happen to me. Finally deciding to tell everyone, I came out to my close friends by Facebook messages. It got annoying typing individual messages so I just thought “what the hell?” and posted it in my Facebook status. It got something like 70 likes and 100 comments, so it made me feel a lot better! Everyone at school was talking about it, but no one gave me grief about it.

## Alice Bisexual, 19

I first came out as bisexual to two people, my best friend and my boyfriend. My best friend quickly told the entire school, not in a mean way, but the constant questions sucked. My boyfriend accused me of cheating - “how else would you know you were bi?” - but eventually got over it. A few months after that I listed my orientation as “bi” on MySpace just so people wouldn’t have to keep pestering me. I didn’t really care what anyone thought, except my parents who I don’t share much about myself with.

One day I left my computer on and went to school. When I came home mum sat me down and asked if what my MySpace said was true. I freaked out and ran upstairs. I wasn’t ready to talk about it with my parents, even if they were. It took me another 5 years to finally come out to my parents, after testing the water by talking about going to a marriage equality rally and Minus18 events. I honestly don’t know what I was so scared of! Mum said she had figured out it wasn’t just a phase and that she loved me no matter what.

The only thing that really changed was that I could finally talk openly about my views on marriage equality and how I started up a gay-straight alliance at my school, which my parents were proud of and now boast about to their friends! Coming out seemed like SUCH a big deal at the time but now I don’t know why I was so scared. Being bi is only one small aspect of who I am and if someone has a problem with it, well, that’s their problem.

## Millaa, Genderqueer, 21

My family was pretty poor growing up. As a teenager, I always wanted to stand out and make an artistic impact. I became known for my outrageous fashion often arriving at cafes dressed in leg warmers, stockings, bikini briefs, dinner suits, colourful makeup, elaborately decorated high heeled shoes and heavily hennaed hair affecting an androgynous image.

I came to the realisation I was genderqueer at age 19. One day when talking to a friend about the diversity of gender I came to the conclusion that I didn’t feel I fitted a male or female gender role. Sometimes I have a boy day and the next a girl day, and that’s fine.



# the best things about being queer.

Dani Lou

Being queer can feel like a tough gig, but it's really, really awesome too! Even though we have to experience stuff that straight or cisgender people don't have to, there are a ton of things that make being queer pretty damn awesome.

## 1. You have a huge community behind you

If you identify as LGBTIQ, guess what? You're definitely not alone! There are countless people who are in heaps of different Queer Communities rooting for you. If you're not quite out or you're still discovering certain parts of your identity, it's easy to feel like you're on your own. Maybe in your immediate circles you don't feel you exactly relate to everyone, but trust me, people are out there who are just like you.

I personally love the knowledge that there's a huge group of people in Australia and around the world who, even though we can have different identities and experiences, are part of my community (part of my family, even). There're queer people who have come before us, and learning about the work they've done to change laws to make my life better is pretty damn cool.

Most of all though, meeting other queer people can be the best thing ever. Firstly, queers have the most fun and tell the best jokes. But more importantly, having your sexuality / gender identity in common often means you build relationships with people you might otherwise never meet; let the instant friendship begin!

## 2. The Amazing Online World of Queers™

Sometimes finding this community in person can be tough, which is why a lot of us find friendship or community online. Social media can be a great place for finding people who share similar experiences and identities to you.

I joined a group for queer people in my town four years ago and it changed my whole life. All the closest friends I have now are from that group!

You get to choose who you follow and what you share - meaning ALL of my feeds are incredibly queer. Scrolling through Instagram, I only see cool queer Insta-celebs, artists or activists. Facebook only shows me LGBTIQ articles and videos and also points me in the direction of a TONNE of new queer friends from all around the world.

It can take a bit of tweaking, but the online world is your queer oyster! If you want to know where to get started, we have a Minus18 Facebook group that you can join too.

## 3. Rad organisations and youth groups

Hey, have you heard of Minus18? Just kidding. But the parties, events and resources we have are there to celebrate you - and have fun in the process! There's always heaps of glitter and awesome people to meet.

Not connected to Minus18? There are heaps of other youth groups all over the country. You can check out some at the back of this book <3

## 4. Being you is the best thing on the planet!

This will sound a little corny, but I think that being exactly who you are is one of the greatest things ever. Being unashamedly yourself and exploring different aspects of what makes you you is really powerful! Queer people sometimes have a lot of self-discovery to do, but it's a fun journey that has enormous benefits. When you get to live your life as your most authentic self - well...that's the best feeling.

So yes, the glitter, amazing parties and hilarious queer memes are GREAT, but being your queer self is generally just the greatest thing, however that might look.





## party party.

Micah Scott

**My 18th birthday party was mostly spent with my friends dragging my furniture onto the front lawn while my parents were away for the weekend, and getting rather drunk.**

Being the first of my friends to hit the big one-eight (and not being mates with the fake ID crowd) I decided to spend my first overage night hitting the clubs with some older friends-of-friends who I met a few months before. So one Friday night after a long day of year 12, and being the fresh and eager 18 year old I was, I headed over to meet my new friends-who-I-kind-of-knew-but-not really. Excited for the night ahead, we had a few pre-drinks and did our hair together before jumping on a train into the city.

Walking up to the club my stomach dropped a little bit as my nerves got the better of me. It then dawned on me that amongst all the excitement of my big night out, I actually didn't have a clue about what to expect. Ahem.

Well, it turned out that after being there for an hour, one of the friends-who-I-kind-of-knew had a few too many drinks, and lucky me got to look after him on a couch. Real mood killer let me tell you. It wasn't the last time a friend (or I) would do something stupid while out at night, but having less than perfect friends did teach me a thing or two.

### Go out with your mates

A) You'll have people to hang around with, and help each other out. B) It's kind of lame to go out on your own anyway, don't you think? Besides, they can totally help you.

### Plan how to get home

Getting home can be a complete pain, especially when you live a fair distance from the city. Staying at a friend's house with mates and sharing a cab home with them is a good way to

keep the cost down. It also means you can wake up together and recap on the details from the night before. There's the option of 24 hour public transport like the Nightrider in Melbourne, or if you're lucky like me, your parents might even pick you up at a certain time. Love you Dad!

### Drink in moderation

Vomiting in a toilet or alleyway behind a club is probably the least charming thing you can do. Being that drunk is also going to make it more difficult for your friends to keep an eye on you, and you're more likely to wake up in the morning with a handful of regrets. Predrinking too much before heading out is a pretty common way for people to get drunk and ruin their night before they even get there. So chill it on the shots.

### Drink water, eat food

A big cheeseburger is probably your best friend at 1am, and a few bottles of water throughout the night'll make life sweet too. Not only will it stop you vomiting all over the back seat of the cab, but it'll help reduce your hangover. Bonus!


### Ambulances aren't the enemy

If you or a friend do party a bit too hard, or something goes wrong and you need help - don't hesitate. Ambulance officers are there to help you, not judge you or turn you into the police. Calling an ambulance might save a life - so worrying about getting in trouble shouldn't stop you from getting help.

### Don't feel pressured

Having fun definitely doesn't equal getting drunk, and you should never feel pressured to do something you don't want to or feel the need to do. Nothing wrong with sticking to the softdrink; your body will thank you for it in the morning.

*Need support with your partying habits? Check out some of the organisations on page 32 ↗*



# HERE'S SOME OTHER STUFF YOU MIGHT FIND HANDY

## new words.

### Gay

Someone who likes people of the same sex. Gay usually refers to boys liking boys, but a lot of girls use it too.

### Lesbian

A girl who likes girls (physically or emotionally).

### Bisexual

Someone that is attracted to more than one gender. Bisexuals aren't usually "going through a phase". Some like different genders equally, and some have a preference. Some people may use both bisexual and pansexual to describe themselves.

### Cisgender

Someone who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth; and therefore does not identify as trans or gender diverse.

### Same Sex Attracted

Same sex attracted is exactly what it says. It describes someone who is physically or emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. This term's used more and more these days as it's a much better way to describe people who are not straight.

### Gender Diverse

Describes a person who feels that their gender identity does not fit into the "categories" associated with their assigned sex. For example, someone who is raised as a girl may feel as though the categories of female/feminine are restrictive or don't apply to them. Questioning how gender stereotypes relate to you is normal - and some people identify as gender other than 'male' and 'female'.

### Non-Binary

Some people do not identify with traditional genders of male and female, some people call this being non-binary. Binary literally means something with two types or options, like male and female, so non-binary people can be a mix of the two or something else entirely.

### Transgender

Sometimes people feel that their gender doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth, ie - someone born with a penis might identify as a girl - this is referred to as being transgender. Sometimes trans people change their name, their clothes, or even make changes to their bodies. Sometimes they don't.

### Asexual

A person who is asexual is someone who doesn't experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, (when people chose not to have sex), asexuality is when someone doesn't feel the physical desire to have sex at all. Asexual people may still have sex if they're comfortable with it. Many asexuals still want to have relationships and will have a 'romantic' orientation.

### Intersex

People are born with different kinds of bodies. People who are intersex are born with natural variations in their body that differ from what we might expect to be 'typically' male/female. This can include (but is not limited to) variations in hormones, chromosomes, and sexual organs.

A lot of us are taught that when you have high testosterone that you're male, but if you're a male that is born with low testosterone you may describe yourself as intersex. There are heaps of ways that you can be intersex!

### Queer

Some people identify as queer to mean different, or not aligned to stereotypes. For some, queer means same sex attracted, for others, it means gender diverse. For some, it simply means different.

### Pansexual

Someone who is attracted to people of a number of different genders, which may include people who identify as transgender or gender diverse. Some people may use both bisexual and pansexual to describe themselves.

### Questioning/Unsure

Most people will question their sexual or gender identity at some point. Even if you're straight, it can be confusing stuff, and it's pretty normal to be unsure.

### Stereotyping

Generalising that all people belonging to a particular group have certain characteristics. Like believing that all gay men like Lady Gaga. (OK bad example! But you get the idea).

### Gaydar

The "ability" to tell if someone's gay. Unless you see someone making out with their same sex partner, or they tell you their sexuality, your gaydar isn't going to be exactly accurate. Assuming someone's sexuality or gender identity can actually be pretty sucky.

### Homophobia

Used to describe a whole range of negative feelings or behaviours towards anyone who is same sex attracted, including language like "that's so gay."

### Transphobia

Used to describe a whole range of negative feelings or behaviours towards anyone who is transgender or gender diverse that can lead to prejudice or discriminatory actions or abuse.

### Discrimination

Treating someone like crap, or less than equal because of who they are, like a school not allowing same sex partners to the formal or referring to someone as the wrong gender. Discrimination due to sexuality or gender identity is nearly always illegal in Australia.



# more places to go.

## australia wide.

### MINUS18

Australia's national organisation for LGBT youth, Minus18 is young people leading change, building social inclusion and advocating for an Australia free of homophobia and transphobia.

Jump on to the website, get to know other same sex attracted and gender diverse young people, access resources and advice, and get info on upcoming events.

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)

### HEADSPACE

Headspace is the national youth mental health foundation and supports young people who need someone to talk to or who are going through a tough time. Check out their website to find your nearest headspace centre or for online mental health support.

[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

### QLIFE

QLife is a counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities. QLife provides nationwide, peer supported telephone and online chat support to LGBTI people of all ages.

1800 184 527 [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

## act.

### SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING ACT

SHFPACT is a health promotion charity supporting schools to deliver relevant and effective sexuality and relationships education for ALL students.

[shfpact.org.au](http://shfpact.org.au)

### BIT BENT

Bit Bent is a social support group held in Belconnen and Woden for young people who want to hang out with other LGBTIQ or questioning young people, in a safe and friendly space.

## nsw.

### FAMILY PLANNING NSW

Family Planning NSW provides reproductive and sexual health services as well as information and health promotion for doctors, nurses, teachers and other health, education and welfare professionals.

[fpnsw.org.au](http://fpnsw.org.au)

### TWENTY10

Twenty10 is a community organisation working with and supporting people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, their families and communities in NSW of all ages. It incorporates the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service NSW, including specialised services for young people.

[twenty10.org.au](http://twenty10.org.au)

## nt.

### NORTHERN TERRITORY AIDS AND HEPATITIS COUNCIL

NTAHC provides a range of programs supporting LGBT health, with a particular focus on preventing transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C, STIs and minimising the physical and social impact of HIV/AIDS and Hep C.

[ntahc.org.au](http://ntahc.org.au)

## qld.

### FAMILY PLANNING QUEENSLAND

Family Planning Qld provides sexual and reproductive health clinical services across QLD. They also provide education and training to health professionals, teachers and community leaders.

[fpq.com.au](http://fpq.com.au)

### OPEN DOORS YOUTH SERVICE

Open Doors provides counselling and support services to young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. They also provide support to families.

[opendoors.net.au](http://opendoors.net.au)

## sa.

### SHINE SA

SHine SA (Sexual Health Information Networking and Education SA) works in partnership with government, health, education and community agencies, and communities, to improve the sexual health and wellbeing of South Australians.

[shinesa.org.au](http://shinesa.org.au)

## tas.

### WORKING IT OUT

Working it Out provides services designed to meet the needs of people negotiating their sexuality and/or gender identity and intersex status through individual counselling and support, support groups, student education, workplace training, and community education.

[workingitout.org.au](http://workingitout.org.au)

## vic.

### SAFE SCHOOLS

The Safe Schools program helps schools foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTI students.

The Safe Schools team can work together with your school to build safe and inclusive environments for your whole school community.

[education.vic.gov.au/safeschools](http://education.vic.gov.au/safeschools)

### MINUS18

In addition to its national activities, Minus18 in Victoria runs the annual Same Sex Formal, social and dance events, Stand Out workshops and an online social network for same sex attracted, and gender diverse young people.

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)

## wa.

### FREEDOM CENTRE

Freedom Centre is an organisation and drop in centre for young people to support each other and their communities to be informed, happy and healthy about their sexuality, sex and gender.

[freedom.org.au](http://freedom.org.au)

# standing out.

So you might be asking “what next?” If you’re looking to take things another step, you might want to think about Standing Out against homophobia and transphobia.

Standing Out against transphobia and homophobia, especially at school and uni won’t just be amazing for you, but goes a pretty long way to making sure everybody feels like they belong.

There’re a bunch of different ways to Stand Out. In fact, we’ve got a whole magazine on them.

## Find out where your friends can get support

Your friends *might* be too shy to talk to others about being trans or queer; it can sometimes be pretty intimidating. A lot of the time they might feel like they have to ‘out’ themselves, which they might not be ready to do. Finding out which teachers at school are supportive, or websites / places they can go to meet people is a pretty easy but awesome thing for you to do - especially since we’ve given you a head start at the back of this mag.

## Fundraise for LGBTIQ orgs

Talking about sexuality and gender identity is a pretty decent way of getting other people to talk about it too. Get your student leaders or student council to run events that raise awareness for queer youth, and raise funds for the charities that support them. Rainbow casual clothes days work a treat, and recognising days like International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia are just a few to get you started.

## Help start, or join in a Stand Out group

Some schools/unis have Stand Out or diversity groups - places for trans, queer and straight students to hang out and chat about what’s going through their mind, and to talk about what things they can do together to change things in the school. If your school doesn’t have one, you could be the awesome person that starts it.

## Organise a Workshop

Organise a Minus18 guest speaker or LGBTI workshop in your school or community. We’ll do all the work in helping other people understand what gender and sexuality is all about.

Head to [minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au) for more information or to book yours now!

## Read More Articles

Book an LGBTIQ Workshops

Find Youth Events

Fundraise for LGBTIQ Youth

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)



Australia’s youth driven organisation for LGBTIQ young people.

Young, fearless and smashing homophobia, biphobia and transphobia Australia wide. We run events, resources, workshops and campaigns to help other LGBTIQ young people belong and feel awesome.

Imagine that – we think it all sounds pretty great. If you do too, you might like to support our work or get involved.



ONLINE SUPPORT • BOOK A WORKSHOP • DONATE

[f t i](https://www.minus18.org.au) MINUS18YOUTH

[MINUS18.ORG.AU](http://MINUS18.ORG.AU)





**OMG I'M  
QUEER**