

YOUR Health YOUR World

Esperanza

I've known for a long time that I am a lesbian. When I was a little girl, my grandfather would read me a bedtime story before I went to sleep. Sometimes, he would read fairy tales about a beautiful princess and a charming prince who fell in love, got married, and lived happily ever after. When he read those stories, I knew that when I grew up, I would marry the beautiful princess, not the prince. I didn't begin to realize until I was much older that these kinds of feelings made me different from the other girls at school.

Michael

When I was in school, I was very popular. I played football, had many friends and a cute girlfriend, and got good grades. Everyone thought that I was so happy. What no one realized was that I was gay and I was lying to everyone. The pain of lying became so great that I started using drugs and eventually got kicked off the team. One day, I saw a show on TV about a gay athlete who reminded me of myself. That show gave me the strength to be honest about who I am and to start living honestly.

Tyrone

At a very young age, members of my family called me mean names like *sissy*, and told me to toughen up and act like a boy. I tried to ignore them, but deep inside, I was hurting. One day my mother found a letter I had written to my boyfriend at school. She got so angry! She kicked me out of the house and said that she never wanted to see me again. I had to live on the streets. It was awful. Eventually, I found an agency that gave me a place to live and helped me finish school. I'm doing okay now, but my mother still won't talk to me. I can't understand why. I'm the same son she always had. I'm just her gay son. I wish she knew how much I miss her.

Adrienne

For a long time, I thought that I was just confused. I had always dated men even though I was attracted to women.

Voices: Personal Statements on Being Different

Then I started dating women and thought, Maybe I'm a lesbian, even though I was still attracted to men. It took a while for me to figure out that I am bisexual. I've had great relationships with men and with women. The hardest part about being bisexual is that people think I'm confused or can never be satisfied. On the contrary, I can feel equally fulfilled and content with a man or with a woman. I don't know whether my life partner will be a man or a woman, but I do know that he or she will be very special, and I look forward to meeting him or her.

Portia

I am incredibly lucky to have such supportive parents. When I was young, I loved dressing up in pretty things and playing with dolls. My mother never made me feel ashamed. I began school feeling good about myself. Elementary school was fine, but by middle school, things got pretty bad. I was made fun of, called names, shoved in the halls, and pushed down the stairs. High school was better in some ways. I had friends who stood by me, but even with their support, I was very depressed. I was supposed to be a boy, but every feeling inside told me that I was a girl. I hated myself. I knew I wanted to live as a girl, but I didn't know how people would respond. My parents and I had many long talks. When I said I couldn't go on lying, they agreed to support me. We had a meeting with the principal. I explained to her that I was transgender and that I wanted to be known as a girl and not use my birth name. I expected resistance, but the principal was incredible! She said that the staff had received LGBT training and wanted to be sensitive. She gave me a new student ID and a key to the teachers' single-stall restroom. Some of my teachers don't understand, but they're trying. I know that my experience is unique. Few transgender youths get the support that I was fortunate to receive. Hopefully, that situation is changing. I now speak about transgender concerns at schools and work with other transgender youths to help them get through some of the challenges that they face. I try to be living proof that a person can live honestly and openly.