

My Personal Story

When I was in sixth grade I was worried about girly things like what I should wear to school, what movie I wanted to see with my friends on Friday night, what color to paint my nails, or if I would ever find a boyfriend, but the importance of all of that seemed to fade away quickly when I realized my parents' marriage was coming to a screeching halt. I was confused, my mom had suddenly changed. She no longer carried a purse, quit wearing make-up, and no longer wanted to stay at home. My mom began to constantly spend time with a new female friend. I began to ask myself, "who was this mysterious woman and "friend" of my mom's that suddenly appeared into my mother's life?"

Before I knew it, my older brother and I were given the option to live with the parent of our choice. My brother picked my mom and I picked my dad, a very predictable outcome. My mom never came out to me directly for a few years. As I watched my mom move into a house with a woman of whom she shared a room and bed with, I was offered no explanation. Although my mother believed I was too young to understand, I knew exactly what was going on. The fact that my mom was a lesbian was like having a big fat elephant in the room that no body would acknowledge.

Through all of this confusion, my dad and I instantly became closer than before. I was always a Daddy's girl, he was the one person I always looked up to, and he was the one that would help piece my life as well as his back together. I could easily talk to my dad. He always knew what to say even when he was enduring unexplainable pain; his wife of whom he had loved and shared a life and family with since his early twenties had

left him for a woman. As I began to accept the fact that my life had changed and that my mother was a lesbian, I then had more to come.

I was in seventh grade and it was a snow day, I was happy to sit at home and relax with my dad who happened to be off of work that day. I was sitting downstairs on the couch when my dad came to me and explained that he had something to tell me. I had no idea what it could have been. My dad then explained that he was gay. I wasn't completely shocked because I had considered myself a very observant girl. By this time I was able to learn a little bit about homosexuality and I was already very accepting of it. I of course accepted my dad with open arms respecting the fact that he had the courage to let me in on his life, and share with me something important to him.

As ninth grade came around, I was able to work up the courage to ask my mom about her sexual orientation. I asked her why she couldn't just tell me, and asked her to tell me the truth. I wanted to hear it; I wanted to hear her say that she was a lesbian. I believed she owed it to me. My life had changed suddenly and she didn't give me any explanation whatsoever. My mom finally told me. I felt so much better; I needed to hear her say the truth. With that long over-due task out of the way, I was then able to embrace my mom and begin to move on.

Change came about once again, at a Gay Pride Festival during my freshman year of high school; my brother confirmed what I had already suspected. The rumors had been flowing through the school; I typically dealt with the inappropriate question asked by my peers, "Is your brother gay?" I always replied with "I don't know," and "it's none of your business." I let it roll off of my shoulders because I believed that once he had told me himself, then it was true. I wasn't surprised when I found out my older brother was

gay, I became very proud of him as he carried out his senior year confidently as a young gay man.

Although he had carried himself confidently, it was a little more difficult for me as a high school freshman. Most of my peers knew about my family, somehow the word had spread. They knew my mom, dad, and brother were all homosexuals, which caused them to automatically question my sexual orientation. At first I let it bother me; I got angry and would blow up on people when they asked such inappropriate questions about my sexual orientation. As I began to grow older I embraced it. I was always sure to inform people just because my parents and brother were all homosexuals, it didn't mean that I was too. I stressed to my peers that I would never ask for my family to be any different. I was proud to come from such a unique family.

As my first year of college is coming to a close, I am able to see how much my family has affected me as a person. I would consider myself a very accepting and compassionate person. When I share my family background with new people, they are able to see that I am no different than them. I feel that I have helped to change people's false opinions of homosexuality through letting them get to know me and the three wonderful people in my life.

-Ashley Henderson
19 years old
Davenport, Iowa



My Dad and I after my High School Graduation. June 2006



My brother and I during my Spring Break. March 2007

MY FAMILY



My mom, brother, me, and my dad after my Graduation from High School, I was very excited to be moving on to Luther College. June 2006