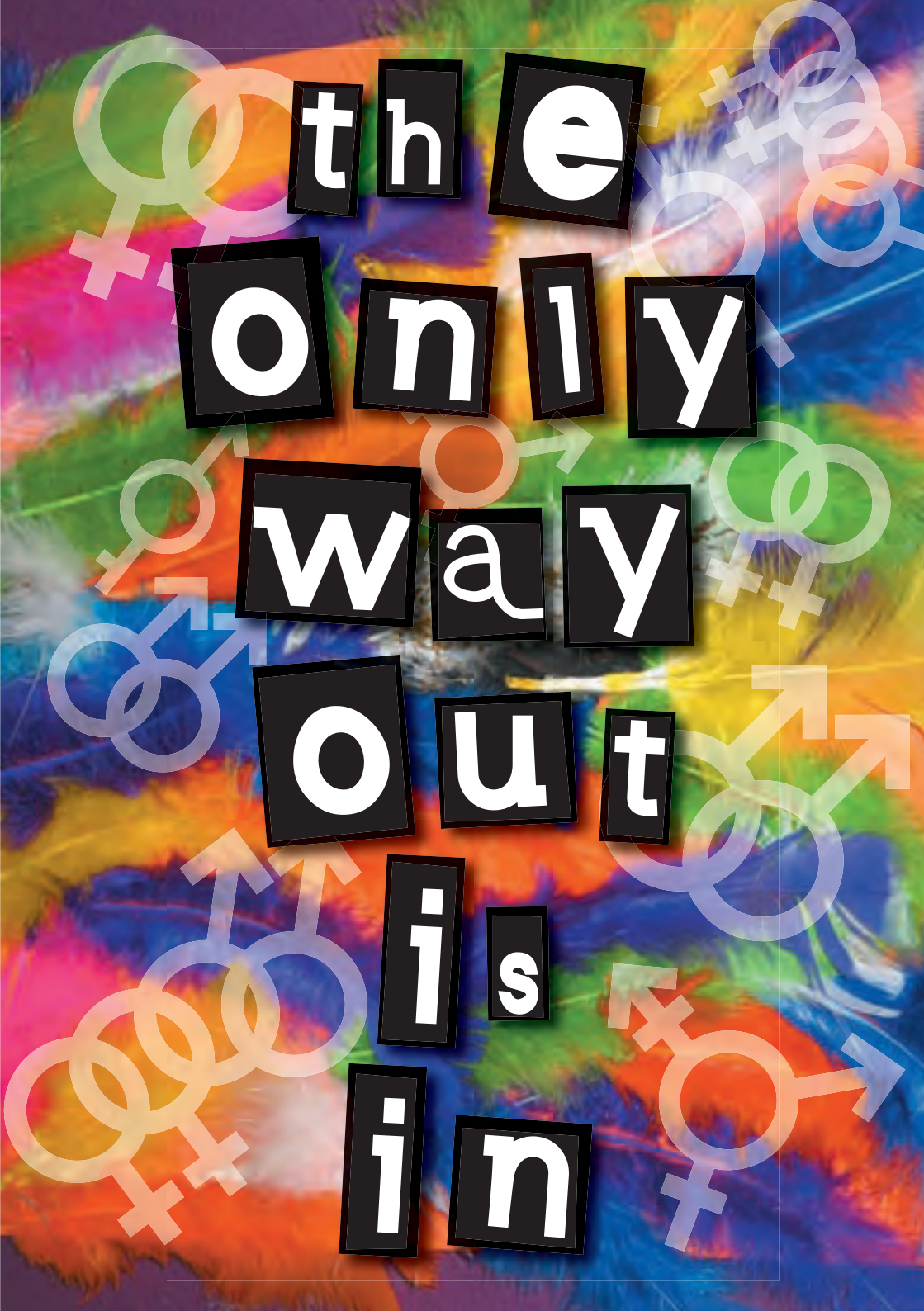


the  
only  
way  
out  
is  
in



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We hope you enjoy the 'the only way out is in'!

*The Crew!*

# realization

The idea for a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender book about 'realization' came from the young people at Open Doors. They felt the need for more information that talks about some of the confusion that happens before you 'come out', hence ... 'The only way out is in'. The book has two different focuses, one being for those who are questioning or starting to explore sexuality. And secondly, for Transgender young people who are also starting to explore and challenge their physical gender. The 'crew' designed and sent out questionnaires to young people, collated the responses and the content was written ...



"I thought my attraction to girls was what all girls felt, we were just supposed to go out with boys"

There's a difference between friends and... "wow you're pretty cute"! And that's what we're talking about, 'realization of attraction'.

Who we are attracted to is pretty important and a large part of our lives, yet at the same time it is only one aspect of 'who we are'. There can be many thoughts and emotions swirling around inside our bodies and our minds... sometimes instantly our minds and bodies are consumed with nice feelings of wonderment, curiosity and intrigue, and usually not too far behind comes, caution, loneliness, confusion and fear.



Welcome to the world of attraction!! Attraction is about feelings, it's about exploration, and it's about wanting to know more. Every person alive experiences these thoughts and feelings in some way. They're natural! The arrival of these emotions can happen at any time in your life and just to keep you on your toes the 'realization of attraction' can be gradual or sneak up on you like a tiger ready to pounce.

I guess you might be a bit confused and may be wondering 'if this is all natural, normal and happens to every person then why am I feeling like I need to hide my feelings and thoughts, not just from my friends and family but sometimes even from myself'. Life is full of mystery and attraction is no different.

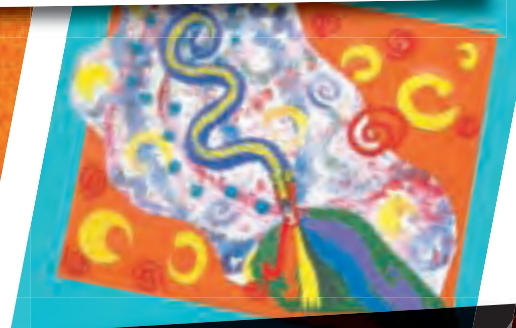


We know that same sex attraction is natural, but sometimes it's not accepted within our society, or by our families and friends, but more importantly we can at times struggle with it within ourselves.

Some of the biggest challenges for all of us can be our own beliefs, the battle between the thoughts and messages we receive from the outside world and our own internal feelings. And that's understandable! From the time we are little the majority of our beliefs and understandings come from the society and culture in which we live, and part of getting older is about developing our own understandings about every day things like - what food we like to eat, music, clothes and what job we might like to do. Trying to sort out what 'we' think and feel about sexuality is no different to sorting out how we think and feel about many things. So while it is important to us what our friends and family think and believe about sexuality, maybe at this time it is more important for us to understand ourselves a bit more...

...she's so cute!

Sometimes people like or even try to describe 'who we are as girls' by 'who we are attracted to' and that's where the word lesbian comes into it, basically the word lesbian means, females who are intimately attracted physically, emotionally or mentally to other females.



"I wouldn't look at guys the same as I looked at girls and when I found out what a lesbian was, I knew that, that was who I was."

Lesbians are not defined by how we look, what food we eat, where we live, how we do our hair, makeup, who our friends are, or what sports we play, all of these things are just 'people stuff' not necessarily lesbian stuff! We all know that there is much more to girls than just who we're attracted to, even though it's a big part of our personal lives. And attraction seems to happen before we even realise and often without planning it. Sometimes we hear stuff like "if you were a lesbian, or even a 'real' lesbian' you'd be doing more boy things like footie or extreme sports stuff", or "you're too pretty to be a lesbian" or "you're too young to know whether you're a lesbian or not".

'I thought that because I didn't fit the stereotype that I couldn't be a lesbian and I thought even if I was other people wouldn't believe me. I also thought that if you knew you were a lesbian that you knew about it practically from when you were born. I used to repeat to myself in my head 'I can't be because if I was I'd already know and I don't know, so therefore I'm not... 'Denial can be very convenient'





I guess we have already worked out that 'attraction' has a whole different feel to other relationships that we might have with girls, like - best friends or someone we admire and it can be really hard for some of us to feel or be ok with ourselves when we first start to put words to those tingles and excitement. I know for some of us that's where 'realization' starts, and maybe then 'confusion', it can be really hard and that's not so surprising. Everyone is discovering what they like in one way or another, every day of their lives and attraction is no different.

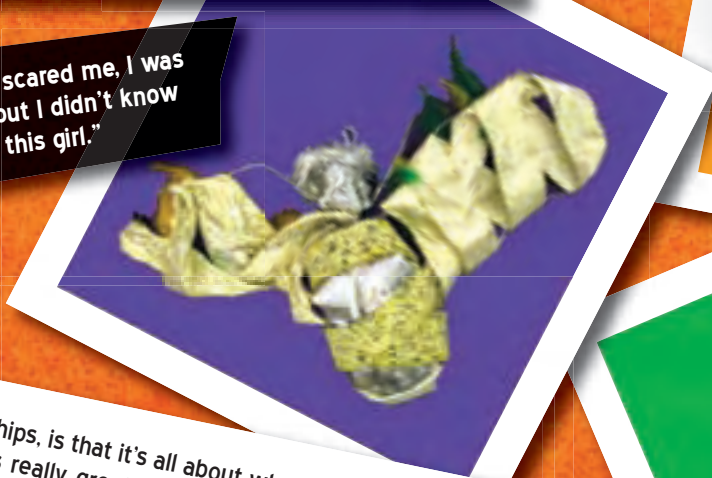
Because life is full of mystery, it's great if we can allow ourselves to explore our feelings and attractions in our own time, when we are ready to, and in a way that feels right for us. Finding out, discovering, or 'I just knew' that I was a lesbian, is a unique experience for all us girls and if you are a lesbian there is no set 'discovery' time, the magic just happens.

"There was a particular girl who was my own age and I started thinking that I really wanted to kiss her, which mean't I wanted 'us' to be more than just friends ..."



'Coming out' to others is a whole different process, yet in some ways is similar and can also be difficult. I guess what we're trying to say, is that the better we can understand and get a handle on our own ideas about our sexuality, and how we think and feel about ourselves being 'same sex attracted', the more it will help us to untangle some of our fears, confusion and isolation. And ultimately, equip us better if and when we decide to share our thoughts and feelings with those who may be important to us, like our friends, family and the cute girl next door!

"I had feelings for my best mate and it scared me, I was about 13. I had boyfriends in the past but I didn't know what feelings were until I met this girl."



The fantastic thing about intimate relationships, is that it's all about who you want to be with and what you want. The other thing that's really great is that you get to explore what it means to you and how it feels for you in a way that is best for you. All the different ways that you may explore your sexuality is fine and unique. Some lesbians have never dated guys and some have relationships with guys to check out what it's like, and for some of us, we are so scared about how we feel that it all seems too hard, and we try to 'make' ourselves be attracted to guys and do all kinds of stuff. We can even try to pretend girls don't exist and try to prove to ourselves and others that we fit in with what may be expected of us.



"I was staying at a friends house for the weekend while I was at boarding school, and I had a one night stand with her sister-I've always been accepting of non-straight people, but never considered myself bi-curious until then. I didn't consciously acknowledge my bisexuality until I was 15 and since I was 16 I have decided I am a lesbian."

"I thought I should have been a boy 'cause girls don't like girls."



# hey...he's hot!

When we first feel attracted to a guy we may feel excited, confused, unsure, relieved, or really comfortable, or we might experience some of these thoughts and feelings all at the same time. We might doubt how real our feelings are, and whether it's OK to feel this stuff. Exploring our thoughts and feelings for others is a natural part of who we are as guys, and happens for guys everywhere, and this can be an ongoing process of discovery and experimentation. Understanding ourselves means valuing ourselves and valuing the uniqueness and similarity within each of us.

"...it's a part of me and no one can, or will, change that, it's who I am."

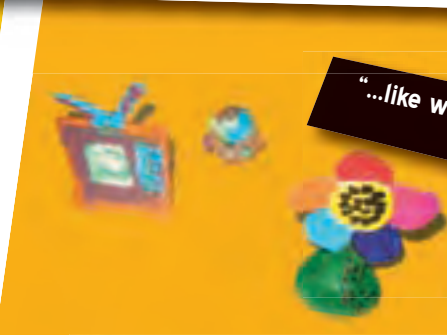
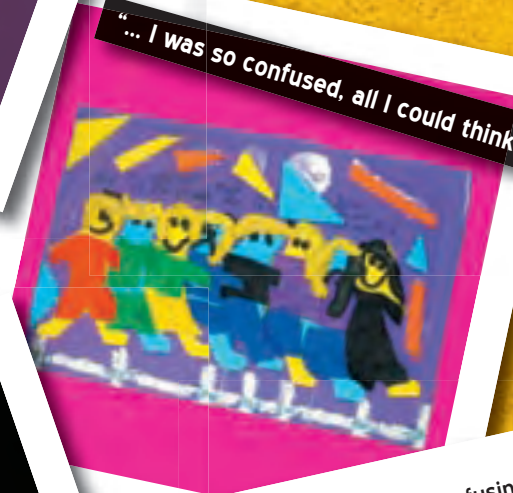


"Calm, yet thinking - 'why me?' "

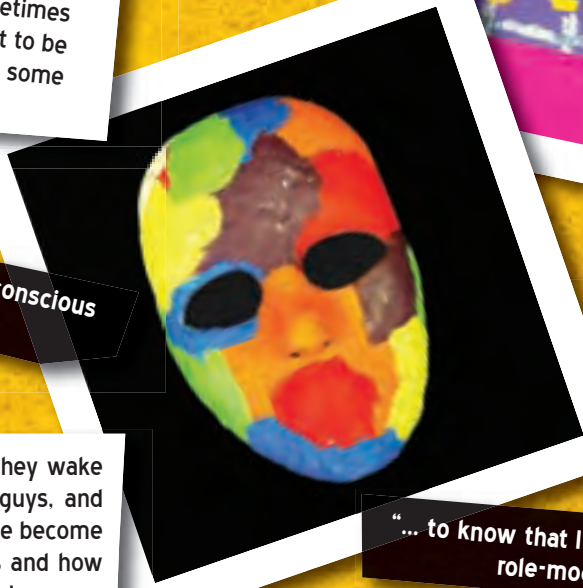
When we first realise that we are attracted to guys we might worry about all kinds of stuff like "am I the only guy who feels this way"? "will I ever meet the right guy"? , and we may be wondering if the guy we are checking out also feels the same way. What's really useful to keep in mind is that we all 'realize' our attraction in our own way and in our own time, and that's very OK!

So what does the word gay mean? Sometimes people try to describe who we are as guys by who we are attracted to, and that's where the word gay comes into it. Basically the word gay means guys who are intimately attracted:- physically, emotionally, and mentally to other guys. Being gay is not defined by your sporting ability, styles of clothing, the way you stand, talk, or who your friends are. Sometimes we hear stuff like "you're too tough to be gay", or "you're not good enough at art to be gay". All of these things are just 'people stuff', and not necessarily gay stuff, and some people say we are too young to know whether we are gay or not!

"... I was so confused, all I could think about was being gay!"



"...like when your subconscious says to your conscious 'hey buddy, you really like guys!'"



It can be a really confusing time and may often happen when we are learning heaps of stuff about who we are and how we want to be. Discovering our sexuality is a major part of learning about the more personal parts of who we are, and this can take time to understand. While sexuality is what we are talking about here it's not the only part of who we are as guys.

Attraction seems to happen without thinking about it. For some guys they wake up one morning and realise they've always been attracted to other guys, and some guys may have known since they were really young. Either way we become aware of how good we feel, and how we've always checked out guys and how natural this has felt. Such beautifully warm feelings can never be wrong!

"... to know that I wasn't the only one, to see positive gay role-models, and someone to talk to."



To think we are the only person on the planet to be attracted to guys can make us feel pretty alone and isolated. The reality is that we're not alone and that being gay is just as natural as not being gay. Often we know how we feel, and we are really comfortable with this realization, yet we may prefer to keep these feelings private for now, and might wait until we feel OK talking about this stuff with someone we trust.

"... I'm just too afraid to tell them about me, I don't know why. I think they'll react fine, I just don't want it to change how they see me ..."

Supportive friends and family can make a big difference when we are exploring our thoughts and feelings, and if they don't understand it's good to know where we can get information and support. It's really useful to talk with others who have experienced, or are experiencing, the same things.



"... being comfortable with being gay is not being afraid of being gay or being afraid of yourself. It's about enjoying being gay and loving what you have and who you are."



'Coming out' to others is a whole different process, yet in some ways is similar and can also be difficult. I guess what we're trying to say, is that the better we can understand and get a handle on our own ideas about our sexuality, and how we think and feel about ourselves being 'same sex attracted' the more it will help us to untangle some of our fears, confusion and isolation. And ultimately, equip us better if and when we decide to share our thoughts and feelings with those who maybe important to us, like our friends, family and the cute guy next door!

She's cute!  
And... he's hot!

Bisexual is the term that is used by people to describe their feelings of physical, emotional and sexual attraction to both guys and girls. There are also lots of people who have these feelings but don't identify as bisexual. Some people identify mainly as straight, gay or lesbian but explore their attractions to people regardless of gender. Our society generally likes to define people as either straight or gay so it can be difficult to sit somewhere in the middle. It also means that lots of people don't understand that it is possible and valid to be attracted to both guys and girls at the same time.



There are stereotypes about bisexuals that can influence the way we see ourselves fitting in. Some people describe bisexuals as lucky, open, living out their true feelings and these descriptions can really fit for us and make us feel good about the way we feel for others. Unfortunately though, there are a range of negative stereotypes for example: fence sitters, undecided, copping out, heartbreakers and experimenters and these are used to make us feel bad about who

we are and these descriptions really don't fit in with the reality of what it's like to be bi.

Sure, there may be some people who identify as bi while they are deciding whether they are attracted to both sexes or just one, but this isn't the same for everyone. Pressure to conform to narrow ideas of 'how I should be' can make it difficult to accept ourselves as unique individuals who just happen to be bisexual.



"... when people talk about bisexuals as being big risk takers, heart breakers, or just 'experimenting', I used to feel worried that maybe I was like that, but that's not me, I am very stable and dependable."

There are a range of feelings that we might go through when we first find ourselves attracted to people of the opposite sex, but when we find these same feelings happening for people of the same sex we might also feel scared, confused, curious, weird and really excited all at the same time. We might doubt how real our feelings are and whether it's OK to feel this stuff. It's not very common for us to be taught that those feelings are normal and natural - we have to work that out for ourselves. What's really useful to keep in mind is that we all 'realize' our attraction in our own way and in our own time, and whatever way that is for you is OK!



"It felt natural but weird at the same time... I asked myself questions like 'why am I like this?....I was curious, looking forward to finding out what might happen.'"

Attraction seems to happen before we even realize and often without planning it. For lots of bisexual young people they notice their attraction to someone of the same sex because it feels a lot like their attraction to people of the opposite sex.

"I started to find girls at school attractive in the same way I would feel for a guy."

"Both sexes turned me on physically and emotionally."

"I looked at other chicks as more than a friend."

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Accepting our thoughts and feelings about being bi, as a natural part of our whole self, might happen as soon as we 'realize' we are both-sex attracted, or it can be an ongoing process of discovery and acceptance. One person defined realization as "the acceptance and acknowledgement of past suspicions and curiosities as being more than you may have believed". So once you start to realize your attractions to both guys and girls, then you might start to work out what it is going to mean for you.



"I was probably very lucky in that I didn't have any massive dilemmas, in fact I find it harder now at 25, and in a stable relationship with a guy, and still finding I miss being with a girl."

"I wasn't afraid of exploring my sexuality because I knew in my heart that it was natural for me to feel this way."

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When we first realize we could be bisexual we might worry how friends and family could react. Our attractions to people of both sexes is 'normal', and it's healthy for us to explore these thoughts and feelings. Understanding ourselves means valuing ourselves and valuing the uniqueness and similarity within each of us.



"(I was worried) "that people would think I was trying to be trendy, or that I would really like someone and they wouldn't want to get involved because I would leave them for someone of the opposite sex."





Sometimes friends, family, and other people make assumptions and judgements about our sexuality. Often we know how we feel and yet we may prefer to keep these feelings private for now, until we feel safe enough to talk about this with someone we trust. Knowing (or assuming) some people could react negatively to our bisexuality can make thinking (let alone talking!) about these feelings really difficult. Sometimes family and friends don't know being bisexual is just as natural as being gay, lesbian or straight, and they might feel awkward and uncomfortable talking about bisexuality. People have all kinds of concerns when they are exploring their bisexuality, like:

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"... that I would be ridiculed and teased at school by people who I once thought were my friends."

These thoughts and feelings are pretty common - lots of us have them when we are first working out who we are and what it means. As long as you work out for yourself who you are and you become more comfortable with it, these feelings won't be such a concern. You can get support from others to help work out the best ways to deal with things like telling your friends and family. Supportive friends and family can make a big difference when we are exploring our thoughts and feelings, but mostly, it's really important to talk to others who have experienced, or are experiencing, similar feelings to us.

"... that I would be an outcast and let down my mother."



"Coming to terms means accepting [your bisexuality] as a reality. Feeling comfortable with it involves pride and not being scared of being open about it when it's safe to do so."

When we start  
to realize the  
'outside  
doesn't match  
the inside'

There are differences between sex, sexuality and gender; we will try to explain these differences in an 'easy' way to understand. Gender is sometimes considered the same as sex, which is whether you are born a female or male. Yet gender is more to do with other things like, our appearance and cultural things like - whether or not you use the girls or guys bathrooms/toilets, sporting teams, the way we're sometimes told that guys and girls should behave. Sex on the other hand is all about genitalia (male or female body parts), hormones, and chromosomes. And sexuality is all about our attractions to other people, for example lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual.



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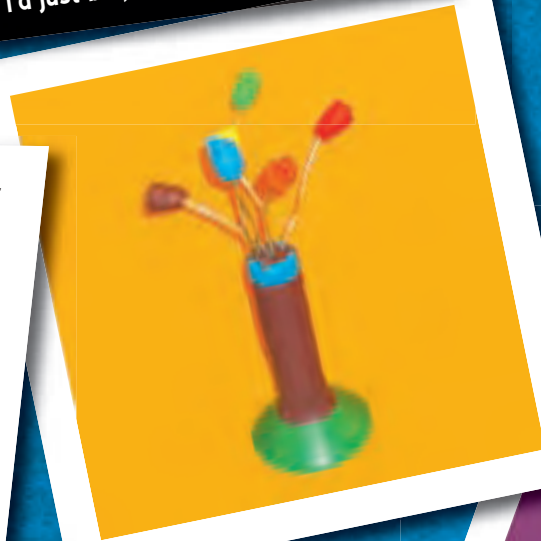




Transgender is the word we use when the sex we are born with doesn't match the gender we feel on the inside of our bodies. And that's what we are going to start talking about here, what might be happening for us if we are questioning our sex and gender!

"... even when I was younger I used to dream about being a girl, I would be in girls clothes and I'd have long hair, and I'd just be playing with other girls ..."

From the time we are little our families, friends, and society define us mostly by our "outside" gender, and never question that again. Our little bodies grow and develop the same way everyone else's does, according to whether it's female or male, yet for us this is really hard because inside our minds and bodies we know and feel that what's on the 'outside' isn't the same 'inside'.



"I'd wear girls clothes under the clothes I had to wear, 'cause it made me feel good, it felt like what I was meant to be doing."

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When we start to realize there is a difference between our inside and outside gender it can be a really hard and confusing time in our life. It can leave us feeling scared, sad, confused and angry, no matter how old you are. It can be so confusing that there may be times that you've wondered if you are a cross-dresser, or drag queen or king, while trying to work out what is happening. Or maybe even a lesbian or a gay guy, getting sexuality confused with gender.

"From the time I was about 9 my mum and other people used to tease me and call me 'gay', they kept doing it all the time and when I started high school it got worse, eventually I just thought I must be gay, because I didn't know what else to call myself ... about a year and a half ago, I was talking to some gay guys and that's when I worked it out ... Gay guys don't want to be girls, they're happy being guys they just like being a bit feminine, it was then that I worked out everyone was wrong and I can't be gay ..."

Being transgender is not a choice it is a medical condition, actually it's medical term is called Gender Dysphoria, which basically means there is a mismatch between inside gender and outside gender. It is not a 'sickness, and has nothing to do with your physical health'.

"... I just didn't feel right wearing it (a dress). It was then that I realized that I, as a person, won't be changing, just my body."

Some of the hardest times can be when our bodies start to develop and grow, which makes puberty difficult, and you find yourself wanting to hide your breast, penis, facial hair and the development of the more physical aspects of the male or female body. The want or need to disguise the visual and physical traits of the sex you know yourself not to be is ok and completely normal, for some.



"... it gets to the point where you know you can't stop your girly urges any more and they have to come out. ...it's horrible I have to wear heaps of pairs of undies, trying to hide what's down there (penis) ..."

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The thoughts and feelings that you may be experiencing will be unique for you, yet lots of transgender people experience similar feelings particularly when we first discover and question our gender. Becoming more comfortable with our discoveries will help us to have the freedom to explore all the options available. Sometimes we know exactly how we feel, yet would like to keep this to ourselves for a while, just until we are feeling a bit safer. You can get support to help work out the best ways to deal with things like - if or when you think you might like to tell your family. Supportive friends and family can help make a difference when we are exploring our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes family and friends don't know that Gender Dysphoria is a medical condition, and they also may have some of societies mixed messages about transgender people, they might feel awkward, or uncomfortable talking and learning about it. What is really important is that we are patient with ourselves and the discoveries that we are making.



# Symbols + words



Red = life  
Orange = Healing  
Yellow = Sun  
Green = Serenity  
Blue = Harmony  
Purple = Spirit

The **Rainbow Flag** represents the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and transgender community. It was designed by Gilbert Baker in 1978 for the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian freedom Day Parade.



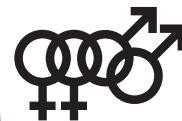
The **Pink Triangle** is easily one of the more popular and widely recognized symbols for the LGBT community and generally represents a safe space.



**Lesbian** - women whose sexual and romantic feelings are for women. This is one of the commonly used symbols for lesbians or lesbian relationships.



**Gay** - guys whose sexual and romantic feelings are for guys. This is one of the commonly used symbols for gay guys or gay relationships.



**Bisexual** - people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for people of both genders, also known as "bi". This is one of the commonly used symbols for Bi-sexual people.



**Transgender** - is when the sex we are born with doesn't match the gender we feel on the inside of our bodies.



**Intersex** - means people who are born with ambiguous genitalia that is, with the full or partial sex organs of male and female. This is the most common symbol for people who are born intersex.



**Heterosexual** - people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for people of the opposite gender, also called "straight"

**Sista girls** - is a concept from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture.

**Homophobia** - Is a term that describes prejudice at a person because they are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

**Heterosexism** - is the belief that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexual relationships are superior and the only valid form of sexual expression.

**Coming out** - Is the term used when we start to be more open with others about sexual identity. 'Coming out' is a process that is different for each individual.

**Sexual identity** - This is what we call ourselves. Such labels include 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual', 'bi', 'queer', 'questioning', 'undecided', 'undetermined', 'heterosexual', 'straight', 'asexual' and others.

**Cross-dresser** - Is someone who on occasion wears what is currently considered the clothes of the other sex. Unlike some transgender people, they do not wish to change their physical sex.

**Transvestite** - Same as cross-dresser. Most people feel that cross-dresser is the preferred term.

**Drag queen** - A man who from time to time wears women's clothes, generally without attempting to be 'convincing'.

**Drag king** - A woman who from time to time wears men's clothes, generally without attempting to be 'convincing'.

**Gender bender** - Anyone crossing the gender line who does not care about appearing 'convincing'. Example: a man wearing a dress, who looks like a man wearing a dress, and doesn't care if he does look like a man wearing a dress. Drag queens are the major group within this category.

# Services



## Open Doors Youth Service Inc.

Counselling and support for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and or Transgender young people 12-18, and their families. Also has a 'Drop On' every Wednesday from 2:30 - 5:00pm. Information for young people, families and other service providers.

PO Box 194

Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

Ph: (07) 3257 7660

Email: [opendoors@opendoors.net.au](mailto:opendoors@opendoors.net.au)

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

## Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association (GLWA)

GLWA is an anonymous LGBT information and counselling service.

Ph: (07) 3891 7377 (Evenings only 7pm - 10pm)

Ph: 1800 184 527 (Free Call) outside of Brisbane metropolitan area

Email: [secretary@glwa.org.au](mailto:secretary@glwa.org.au)

PO Box 1078

Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

## Kids Helpline

Free Call 1800 55 1800

## Sistas of Venus

Sistas of Venus is a group for young Lesbian and Bi women exploring their sexuality.

Ph: (07) 3847 9633 for more information.

Email: [sistersofvenus@yahoo.com](mailto:sistersofvenus@yahoo.com)

## Toehold

Toehold is for gay and bisexual males 25 years and under.

Ph: (07) 3017 1777

Email: [info@quac.org.au](mailto:info@quac.org.au)

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### **Changeling Aspects, Transsexual Support Group**

Changeling Aspects provides emotional and moral support for people with Gender Identity Disorder, and their families and friends. Information on all aspects of gender identity issues is available. Contact Kathy.

Ph: (07) 3286 9155

Mob: 0417 738 491

### **Australian Bisexual Network**

Within Aust.: (07) 3857 2500

Free Call: 1800 653 223

Mobile: 0416 068 532

Email: ausbinet@optusnet.com.au

### **Indigenous Gay Men, Lesbian, Tiddas, Bisexuals and sistergirls are gar'ban'djee'lum (Us Mob)**

Ph: (07) 3017 1737 (Colin) or

Ph: (07) 3017 1736 (Brendan)

### **Prospect House**

Accommodation for homeless LGBT young people.

Ph: (07) 3846 2362

PO Box 8278

Woolloongabba QLD 4102

## **Health services**

### **Gladstone Road Medical Centre**

38 Gladstone Rd

Highgate Hill QLD 4101

Ph: (07) 3844 9599

### **Stonewall Medical Centre**

52 Newmarket Rd

Windsor QLD 4030

Ph: (07) 3857 1222

### **Brisbane Gender Clinic**

2-5pm Wed

Ph: (07) 3227 8679



## **spiritual/Religious**

### **Acceptance**

Support group for Lesbian and Gay Catholics

PO Box 817

Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

Ph: (07) 3846 1714

### **Metropolitan Community Church (MCC)**

For LGBT people

Services @ the Rainbow Centre, Sundays, 10am & 7pm

Ph: (07) 3891 1388 (Pastor Ivor)

Email: pastor@mccbris.asn.au

### **New Way Community Chapel**

Service - Sundays @ 6pm

Drop In 2<sup>nd</sup> last Wednesday of the month at 7pm

TOCH rooms SWARA complex College Rd, Spring Hill

Ph: (07) 3366 5412

### **St.Albans Anglican Church**

Holy Communion Sunday 9am and fellowship

Cnr Milton Rd & Wienholt St, Auchenflower

Ph: (07) 3870 2566 (Father Leo)

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## **Family support**

### **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

Voluntary group of parents whose primary objective is to assist families with LGBT members to understand and care for each other and to offer support where needed.

Ph: (07) 3017 1739

### **Building Bridges**

Support network for parents, family and friends of lesbian and gay people

Ph: (07) 3391 8626

Email: micah@powerup.com.au

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