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Peers OUT  
Smarting  
Homophobia



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smarting  
homophobia



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## Introduction

Today there are many beliefs and assumptions about same sex attraction and same sex attracted people and sadly, the best known of them are very negative and harmful. These negative beliefs were invented many years ago by the church, (homosexuality is a sin) psychiatry & psychology (homosexuality is an illness) and by the law (homosexuality is a crime) and they were used to stop people from having same sex sexual encounters and from feeling good about themselves.

Late last century it was realised that psychiatry, psychology and the law were wrong about homosexuality. In 1973, psychiatry removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. The laws have been changed in all Australian states and territories to include homosexuality as part of the many legal ways of being sexual and many states have removed the discriminatory laws against same sex couples. Despite this the negative beliefs are still common in our culture. Some parts of the Christian church have also realised that they were wrong and the Uniting Church now ordains homosexual men and women. Many of the remaining Christian churches are divided and going through a process of change. Other religions have produced negative beliefs about homosexuality but we have restricted this booklet to Christianity because it is the dominant religion in Australia.

**Over the last eight years,** we have collected autobiographical stories from over 2000 same sex attracted young Australians. What they have told us is that homophobic beliefs are often used as a form of abuse by other people and this causes a lot of hurt. However, these beliefs are especially a problem when young people believe in them or 'wear' them themselves. As Adrian said: When so many people tell you how disgusting you are you start to feel disgusting - but you don't have to. In this booklet we use examples of the ways that same sex attracted young people turn these harmful, negative, assumptions upside down and create positive ones. Young people outsmart homophobia by changing, ignoring, resisting and faulting these beliefs and finding new more positive ones to 'wear'.

**It's like your clothes.** If the only clothes you have to wear are dirty, itchy and smelly, you'll feel miserable when you wear them.



**But if you have other beautiful,** warm soft and silky clothes to wear you'll feel good when you wear them.

**What we are presenting here** for you are examples of the many ways same sex attracted young people outsmart homophobia with new positive beliefs that feel great to wear. Have a look at them, try them out and think about creating new ones.

We've divided the beliefs into five overall sections based on the negative beliefs and ways to outsmart them.

- Homosexuality is a sin
- Homosexuality is a mental illness
- Homosexuality is unnatural
- Homosexuality is a phase
- Homosexuals live lonely miserable lives

We've also included a background to the beliefs and some useful links.

\* If you have ways of outsmarting homophobia that you'd like to tell us about please email us at [ssay@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:ssay@latrobe.edu.au) and visit our website at [www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay)





## How this belief affected young people

*I got a rude shock* in my catholic high school when the teacher was talking about 'pooftas' one day and when I finally read the section in our bibles about homosexuality...after that I went hard core Christian and hated myself for a good few years.  
**Spencer 20 years**

*My mother threw me out* of the house and said don't come back till you give your heart to Jesus.  
**Chrissie 16 years**

*I also had a few nasty letters* telling me I was going to hell, and that I was disgusting and deserved to die. It served as a timely reminder that homophobia is well and truly alive and well.  
**Dan 20 years**

*We have 4 priests in the family* and live in a very strict catholic house, so my parents decided that I'd made the decision to 'follow the path of the devil'.  
**Garrett 18 years**

*Came out to everyone* except my family and religious friends and then attempted to turn into a celibate, non-practising lesbian, got lonely and more and more depressed = suicidal and self harming. Suicidal because I couldn't see how I could NOT be a lesbian and I couldn't see how I could NOT live without my family/ religion so stuck between the proverbial rock and hard place - death looked like a good and logical option.  
**Kiley 20 years**

*When I was going through* religious conviction it was very hard because I hated myself which is a lot harder than when someone else hates you.  
**Ray 21 years**

*I spoke to the school* social worker and priest (because I was really scared that I would be 'committing a sin' by being gay). I was informed that to be gay was okay, I just couldn't have sex with someone from the same sex 'cos that was a sin.  
**Rebecca 21 years**

## Where did this belief come from?

Christianity considers same-sex attraction a sin, or does it? The answer to this question depends on which Christian you ask (liberal or conservative) and when you ask it. Conservative Christians claim that the bible condemns homosexuality, while Liberal Christians maintain that homosexual relationships were accepted by early Christian churches and that there is no evidence in the bible to support an anti-homosexual stance. This stance depends on six quotes from the bible, however, there is a lot of debate over the translation, interpretation, meaning, and context of these passages. Importantly, Jesus Christ never spoke about sexualities.

According to John Boswell, a Yale historian, homosexuality was accepted in the first 200 years of the Christian church, gay prostitution was taxed and in 7th century Spain, six national church councils refused to support legislation against homo-genital acts. By the 9th century NO Christian group outside of Spain forbade homo-genital acts. In the Middle Ages, a gay subculture thrived, as in Greco-Roman times and gay literature was standard discussion material at courses in the medieval universities where clerics were educated. Christian opposition to homosexuality arose at a time when medieval society first began to oppress many minority groups, such as, jews, heretics, the poor, and usurers. According to Boswell, "A campaign to stir up support for the Crusades by vilifying the Muslims with charges of homosexual rape also played a part in Christian Europe's change of attitude toward gay and lesbian sex." Over the centuries, the church has used the bible to support homophobia, anti-semitism, slavery and other forms of racism.

More recently, in Australia, the Rainbow Sash Movement has seen Catholics requesting communion unsuccessfully while attesting to their sexual orientation by the wearing of rainbow colours at mass. The National Assembly of Uniting Church in Australia explicitly approved clergy in same sex relationships in 2003 and in 2006 confirmed this decision despite repeated opposition within their ranks. The Anglican church has generally held the line against ordination of homosexuals but also has more radical arms which support the views of Bishop Spong that homosexuality should be acceptable within the church.



## How young people outsmarted this belief

*I had religious difficulties*, but now I understand god loves me for me. Taylor, ftm 17 years

*I think God is happy* when we are. Suzanne 16 years

*My only negative reaction* from family came from my Dad's ultra religious parents. They weren't happy that I was "going to tarnish the family name" but I told them essentially to like it or lump it, as I was not prepared to put up with them. So I was prepared to cut them off but they have behaved themselves since then. It was also a great experience because I had so many people contact me in support. Dan 20 years

*I see no sin* in loving the same sex - it is a beautiful thing. Lara 16 years

*I delved deeper* into the bible and homosexuality and realised that there was nothing in it that says homosexuality is wrong - nothing substantial. There were so many holes in the religion and bible that I realised it was ridiculous to take it seriously. Sam 19 years

*Well, at first* it felt morally wrong - I'd read a lot about how homosexuality in God's eyes was a blatant aberration of nature, how the sodomites were punished, etc. All that crap. Then I began to research it, delve into my own feelings and analyse them along with what I found to support them and I discovered that what I had encountered was perfectly natural. And that I shouldn't feel the least remonstrance over it. Shanta 16 years

*Over the last few years*, I have gradually learnt to accept myself more and over the last few months I have started to actually feel pretty good about who I am. This is thanks to talking to a lot of people, coming out, going to counselling, working to resolve my past issues with religion, and in general a philosophy to be honest and the 'real' me. Markus 17 years

*Told my priest*, who was very supportive and in the same position. Didn't tell me anything that I didn't already know, and made me feel a little better about being Christian and gay. Andre 20 years

**Scott's story::**  
20 years

*Dear Mum and Dad,*

When I moved out of home, you sent me a card - in it were the words "I pray that you will meet a very special person that will compliment and enhance all that you are and that you will experience the love and trust and happiness that Dad & I enjoy as husband and wife." I, too, had been praying this same prayer, and I believe my prayers were answered when I met Michael, the most amazing guy who I want to spend my life with. But in meeting such a special person, it made me challenge everything!

Suddenly I had to reconcile my feelings with my own personality, religion and relationships, and I have been doing this ever since. God is still important to me, as He gives me the most amazing sense of peace and confidence that can't be found elsewhere. The exciting thing is that my relationship with God has actually grown stronger the more I have come to accept the person He created me to be. It's like I've been in denial all these

years and it's been holding me back from being open and honest with Him. I have accepted the fact that I am homosexual, and that whatever relationship I have with God and the church must include this out of necessity.

I've argued, demanded and bargained with God on many occasions, but each time through His mercy and wisdom, He has affirmed both my sexual orientation and His love for me. I believe in a God of love and grace, and although it may be hard for some to believe, I can feel His overwhelming support and confirmation on this matter. What's more, I believe He wants to use me to teach others lessons of acceptance, tolerance and grace.

I've heard sermons preached on how homosexuality is an 'abomination' and I've spoken to many people on the issue and done my own research too. God created me as who I am, and that includes my sexual orientation. I don't want to get caught up debating whether or not being attracted to the same gender is a sin - all that this would lead to is spiritual defeat; I know I'm created in His image, and His grace is sufficient for me. I really value my history with the church and the beliefs associated with it, but I often feel hurt and betrayed because I feel that the church is constantly rejecting me.

"God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference."

## Useful links!

**The Gay Christian Network website**  
[www.gaychristian.net/](http://www.gaychristian.net/)

**An online magazine for GLBT Christians:**  
[www.whosoever.org/index.shtml](http://www.whosoever.org/index.shtml)

**Christian Gay's website:**  
[www.christiangays.com/](http://www.christiangays.com/)

**Religious Tolerance website:**  
[www.religioustolerance.org/homosexu.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/homosexu.htm)

**Metropolitan Community Church - Melbourne:**  
[www.mccmelbourne.com](http://www.mccmelbourne.com)



belief # 2:: {homosexuality is a  
mental illness}

yeah right!

## How this belief affected young people

*One day when my mother* was on her way out I asked her: By the way, what did dad say when you told him about Kim and Bec (the lesbian couple I'm friends with)? I asked her this because when she found out I was friends with them she got very upset, and thought they were molesting me or something because as she said 'that's what those kind of people are like'. *Rachel 19 years*

*When people around me* talk about how disgusting gay people are I do think it may be disgusting if so many people say it is ... but then my feelings win out over those thoughts. *Sara 21 years*

*I told my mother* last year but she wasn't supportive. She called a psychologist and thought about injecting male hormones to make me straight but I refused. *Neil 16 years*

*I would pray every night* to god that he would cure me of this 'disease', however, half way through the year I soon discovered that it wouldn't just 'go away' and this caused me much grief. *Myles 15 years*

*I've been told I should die* before I spread more disease. *Rick 16 years*

*Stupid pool* you are worthless to society you are better off killing yourself. *Noah 15 years*

## Where did this belief come from?

Being same sex attracted is not a mental illness. Many years ago, homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The list of mental disorders (called the DSM) is supposed to be based on scientific evidence, however most of the information about homosexuality being a mental illness was based on studies involving same-sex attracted people who were in therapy for emotional problems.

When research, undertaken by Evelyn Hooker in the 1950s, was expanded to include a wider, more representative sample, homosexuality was not found to be a mental illness (Australian Psychological Society, 2006). This research compared heterosexual and homosexual men and found homosexuals were not inherently abnormal and that there was no difference between homosexual and heterosexual men in terms of pathology (Religious Tolerance, 2006).

In 1970 and 1971, gay and lesbian activists lobbied the APA and in 1973, homosexuality was removed from the list. In 1994, the association released the following statement '...homosexuality is neither a mental illness nor a moral depravity. It is the way a portion of the population expresses human love and sexuality'.

Today, mental health professionals do not consider homosexuality an illness, mental disorder, or emotional problem. It is however, recognised that the stigma and discrimination same-sex attracted people face can result in emotional and/or social problems. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) urges all mental health professionals to dispel the stigma that homosexuality is a mental illness.

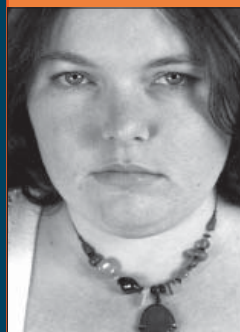
In terms of illness, the belief that HIV/AIDS is a gay disease has also been used against homosexuals - but it is wrong. HIV is transmitted through homosexual and heterosexual contact. World-wide, the majority of HIV transmissions have been through heterosexual contact.

## How young people outsmarted this belief

*I'm still very much a closet case* as my Italian Catholic upbringing tends to ignore homosexuality - my parents treat it as something done by perverted people who live in 'dodgy' suburbs and are out of work etc.... They don't know that honest, decent, beautiful people can be gay, including their pride and joy. Russel 18 years

*I wanted mum to tell my dad* cos I was scared of how he would react. In the end he actually reacted better than my mum, but due to her I got sent off to the local GP (a member of their church - is that a conflict of interest or what...) who then sent me off to a shrink friend of his for intensive therapy. I lasted 2 sessions then I chucked a sad and refused to go to any more unless my parents went to an equal number of PFLAG sessions. They refused so I refused to go anymore as well. Trent 19 years

*My mum recently told me* she heard there are hormones I can take to make me 'better'. I wanted to tell her to get fucked cos I'm not sick!!!! She's so fucken clueless ... which is quite sad for someone who's as well educated as she is (both of my parents have masters degrees) ... but I guess that doesn't equal tolerance. Freddy 21 years



## Haden's story::

17 years

*What can I say*.....you can probably tell from my postcode that I live in a small town which already makes things difficult. The attitude here is that homosexuality is some sort of mental disease and gays and lesbians are frowned upon. Currently I'm in yr 12 studying for my TEE and the last of my problems is worrying about my sexuality but it's something that's always there, and I will admit that it does make things like study much harder. My school-life isn't all bad, but I can credit that to the fact that I'm not 'out' to the entire world yet. In fact the only people that know the true me is my best friends, the guyz I talk to on the net and my parents. Even though my parents still don't believe I'm gay :( they just keep telling me that that I've got some mental problems or I'm abnormal and that 'I can change if I want to'. No offence to them but how dumb can you get: I am who I am and I can't change that. I've known I'm this way since I was about! 13 but only really admitted it to myself at the end of last year when I first told my parents about it. Well that's enough ranting and raving from me, if it helps I think the one thing that would make my life easier would be my parents accepting me for the person I am & not telling me I've got mental problems, that really gets me down.



## Useful links!

**Australian Psychological Society (APS) (2006). Sexual orientation and homosexuality:**  
[www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/12.5\\_10.asp#is2](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/12.5_10.asp#is2)

**American Psychiatric Association (APA) on Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality:**  
[www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm](http://www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm)

**Evelyn Hooker:**  
[www.psychologymatters.org/hooker.html](http://www.psychologymatters.org/hooker.html)

**Religious Tolerance. (2006). Professional Associations' statements about Homosexuality:**  
[http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom\\_prof.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_prof.htm)





## How this belief affected young people

*My father dismissed it* as a 'phase' and encouraged me to keep it to myself. (Goodness knows what the neighbours would think!) **Alisa 17 years**

*I talked to my best friend,* and she said 'Don't worry, I went through that stage too'. **Krista 19 years**

*The whole 'coming out' process,* well when i did it my father freaked out shook his head in disappointment, and told everyone it was just a stage ... it makes me feel angry and I lost a lot of respect for him. **Brea 21 years**

*I knew I was gay* when I had a girlfriend at 15. I told my parents I was bi, they convinced me I was straight after telling me that it was a phase. I then broke up with my girlfriend and told my parents I was definitely gay. **Sammie 19**

*You're not gay you're just confused* all you need is a good cock, you're only a lesbian because you haven't done it right. **Kassie 16 years**

*At about this time* I came out to my parents which didn't go very well. They essentially said 'We knew already, it's a phase and don't do anything til you go to uni'. **Jess 21 years**

## Where did this belief come from?

Your personal feelings are important and valid. The belief that same sex attractions are a phase in confused young people who are 'easily influenced' is common in the heterosexual community. Freud may have contributed to this belief when he suggested that lesbians were immature women who would become heterosexual when they 'grew up'. The belief that their child will grow out of their same sex attractions may be used by parents and friends to feel better when they can't deal with their child or friend's sexuality. As human beings we often use denial to protect us from difficult situations.

Saying to a young person that this is a phase may help others feel better in the short run but is very damaging to the same sex attracted young person. Regardless of whether or not same sex attractions are a phase for a particular young person, their sexual feelings are real to them and should be respected. To say that homosexuality is a 'phase' is insulting because it implies that it is a confused lesser state and that only heterosexuality is the 'real thing'.

For many young people, same sex sexual attractions are not a phase and they continue throughout their lives. Like young heterosexuals, they need their feelings and choices to be affirmed by those around them.

## How young people outsmarted this belief

*I am a proud, mentally healthy, strong,* young lesbian. Done deal. Not confused, not going through a phase, not the result of a domineering mother/father ... and apparently not contributing to the survival of the species (thanks John Howard!)  
Abbey 20 years

*I am attracted to both males and females*  
... I've known about this since I was about 13 years old but am only just recently coming out. I don't think it's a phase as I have been this way for most of my life. Monica 18 years

*Christmas last year* my sister read a sms from a guy I was having a relationship with and this upset me. I was so upset and mum didn't understand why ... so I told her. She was not very supportive and she went through denial and was telling me it was just a phase. But then I started dating a guy in my own town .... I told mum about this guy and she didn't like it, so I told her I will never change and she had to think of it from my perspective, I told her how hard it had been for me and I needed someone. Finally my mum accepted me as being gay but I understand it was hard for her as her mother had left her father for another woman. Ted 16 years



## Sabrina's story

19 years

*I didn't tell my Dad* until almost 12 months after my mum found out. He was great at first, but then did a 180 and started challenging my feelings - he would ask 'since you've not slept with a guy, how do you know?' and he would give me condoms, almost encouraging me to go and 'Try it out.' That stuff really upset me at the time, but thankfully my mum had started to come around and was quite supportive by then. When dad would challenge me I would usually just throw it back at him and ask the same thing 'well you've not slept with a guy either, so how do you know?' To this day he is still unsure of my sexuality, however it doesn't matter as much to him. We agree to disagree about how one knows whether they are gay or not.

## Stephan's story

18 years

*I first figured out that I had a crush* on my best friend when I was 12. I thought it might be a passing phase at the time and let things simmer for a while. When I was 13, I realised that it was probably not a phase, and that I in fact might be bisexual or even gay. This didn't really bother me. I kept it to myself though because I wasn't sure. When I was 14, I had sorted my sexuality out in my own mind and was ready to tell other people. I came out to everyone close to me within a week, and to other people over the next 6 months. I never had a bad reaction, and I'm very comfortable with my sexuality. I have a wonderful boyfriend who I've been with for nearly a year now, and I'm very happy in life.



## Useful links!

**PFLAG. Is it a phase?:**  
[www.pflagdenton.org/fl\\_MoreQuestionsAndAnswers\\_01.htm](http://www.pflagdenton.org/fl_MoreQuestionsAndAnswers_01.htm)



**b**elief

# 4:

same sex

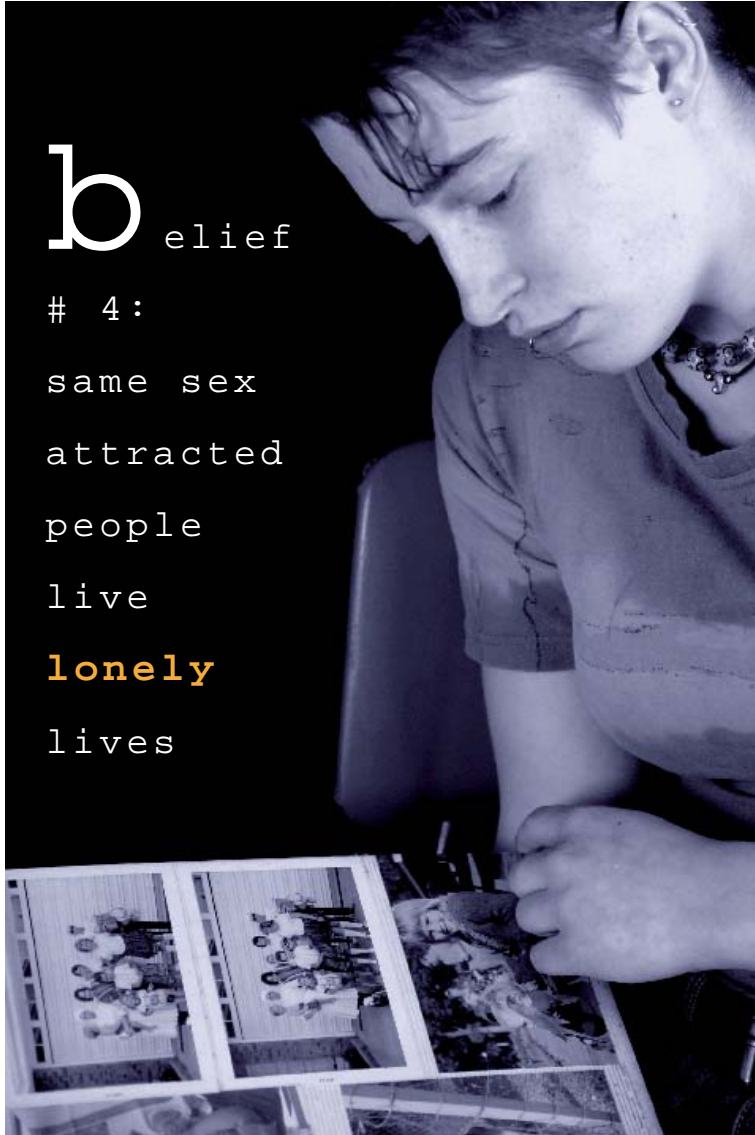
attracted

people

live

**lonely**

lives



## How this belief affected young people

*I will be graduating end of next year* and I will be going back to my home country. I am worried that I will end up alone for the rest of my life, not knowing what love is like and not being able to share your life with that special someone. **Byron 20 years**

*In the next few years* up until I left school I began to get very depressed though at least now I had a few friends at school. I became quite cynical about life and people in general and felt that I wasn't worth anything. That is when I began to get suicidal. I was worried about the future mainly and what type of life I would have. I imagined myself alone and abandoned by my family whom I loved so much. I never imagined a partner beside me. **Kade 19 years**

*My parents said* that I'd never find someone, that I'd always be alone and unhappy and that by telling them that I was gay, I'd made them depressed. Sometimes I worry about being completely alone later in life because I am gay. **Andre 17 years**

*Well I've recently come out* to my family and it's left me feeling kinda guilty. I'm the oldest child on mum's side and she was kinda disappointed knowing she probably wouldn't get grandchildren from me. **Griffin 17 years**

*I probably could adopt kids* when I'm an adult if I wanted but of course there would be a lot of adversity to overcome and I wouldn't be as able to have kids of my own flesh and blood with whoever I may fall in love with as an adult. Overall, I'm upset that I won't have the traditional model of a family, if I do have kids. In reality - unfortunately I see myself as becoming a lonely old man. **Jared 15 years**

## Where did this belief come from?

As a same sex attracted young person you have just as much chance of finding the love of your life and forming a long term relationship as a straight person. Unhappiness and loneliness can happen for many reasons - life circumstances, individual paths followed, or unfortunate events. Same-sex attracted or not, we are all exposed to these possibilities. The belief that gays and lesbians do not have children is partly behind this belief as is the lack of information about long term relationships. Besides the fact that having children is not a safeguard from loneliness, many lesbians and gay men are now having children in their same sex relationships.

This can happen through many means – heterosexual sex, donor insemination and fostering. While the rules about these things are different in each state and territory, the laws are changing. As of 2006, lesbian and gay couples can foster a child ([http://adoption.about.com/cs/fostercare/f/who\\_canfoster.htm](http://adoption.about.com/cs/fostercare/f/who_canfoster.htm)) but not adopt. The Victorian Law Reform Commission, however, has recommended that lesbian and gay couples be allowed to adopt, access assisted reproductive technologies and be registered as parents of their children.

In addition to the concept of family incorporating a partner and children, family is really about people around you who love and support you. Friendship groups and the gay community are regarded as family by many people, hence the slogan 'We are family'. As a same sex attracted person you can lead a happy fulfilled life, have kids, create family and have a committed relationship just like everyone else.

## How young people outsmarted this belief

*I'm so so proud of being gay* and I do want to get married to a woman and raise two beautiful children with the help of my best friend Sam and his sperm and the constant support of my gay and straight friends and also my family. Donna 18 years

*Well I've always considered it* to be a blessing to be gay. I'm part of a community that is loving and caring. Terrance 15 years

*Living in a rural area* has taught me a bit about people and life. The experience has made me stronger. I plan on living out the normal Australian life. I will get married, I will be a supportive partner, I will make my partner happy, I will be there for him through thick and thin, I will get a car, I will get a house and most importantly I WILL BE HAPPY!! no one will take that from me, that includes politicians who are more worried about the political game than the people they represent. Jeremy 18 years

*I plan to get married,* whether it is allowed by law or not, I will still have a ceremony. I plan to have children, a family, and a wonderful life with my husband until the day we both die. Ryan 18 years



## Abbey's story

20 years

*I was convinced by the time I was 16* that I was a lesbian and that that meant I would always be alone. I thought that if I became a career woman I could just tell people I hadn't had time to meet the right man and that's why I was still single. I didn't think I would ever be able to come out. I lived like this for a couple of years ... I saw that I was on a journey, and that there were many possible paths I could take, but I learned the path that would lead to happiness for me was not pretending to be some straight career woman with no time to meet a husband, but actually being honest about who I was and then just hoping for the best. I am still at law school, but now instead of being a successful single career woman lawyer I am going to be a successful, partnered career woman lawyer, and with any luck I might just change the world!



## Useful links!

**Mogenic: Gay teens chat and gay youth personals community:**  
[www.mogenic.com/](http://www.mogenic.com/)

**Love makes a family:**  
[www.lovemakesafamilyaustralia.org](http://www.lovemakesafamilyaustralia.org)

**The Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby:**  
[www.vglrl.org.au/index.php](http://www.vglrl.org.au/index.php)

**Rainbow Families Council of Victoria:**  
[www.rainbowfamilies.org.au](http://www.rainbowfamilies.org.au)

**Australian Coalition for Equality:**  
[www.coalitionforequality.org.au](http://www.coalitionforequality.org.au)



Belief # 5:  
same sex  
attraction is  
unnatural



## How this belief affected young people

*My family is quite a conservative one* (being Asian). My parents are migrants and they've made so many sacrifices for me, so I feel obliged to make something of myself. From their point of view, me being a lesbian would bring shame on the family name. I always hear my father commenting that homosexuals are 'unnatural'. Being the eldest child, I also have a duty to be a positive role model for my younger brother. How can I be if what I am is unnatural?  
**Kristine 18 years**

*When i first told one of my friends*, he was in complete denial, and then tried to 'convert' me to being straight, and also tried to reason with me that homosexuality was a completely unnatural thing and that because I've been thinking about it for so long, I've convinced myself that's who I am. **Madeline 18 years**

*I first thought I might be gay* when I was in year 11, but I was very distressed about possibly being a freak, and so tried to forget it for the next 12 or so months. **Paul 21 years**

*It was a huge rollercoaster ride* of emotions for me not knowing if I were normal, acceptable etc. Growing up in a small (Asian) community where homosexuality was seen and is still seen as 'abnormal' hurts. **Michael 18 years**

*When I was in my early teens* I started to become attracted to members of my own sex, however, I dismissed those feelings because I heard they were abnormal, and because I thought they were wrong. **Daniel 17 years**

*I knew when I was about 13* for sure and I didn't come out or anything because I didn't even consider it a big deal. I just thought that it was normal. Then I went to high school and realized just how 'not normal' people actually thought that it was so I suppressed it. I thought that I was a bad person and it was a bad time for me. I was an angry grade 9 child. **Selina 16 years**

## Where did this belief come from?

Being same sex attracted does not make you abnormal or unnatural. This belief that same-sex attraction is abnormal and unnatural may have come out of religious and psychological beliefs described earlier. It may also have arisen due to the fact the same-sex attraction is in the minority and therefore viewed as different and therefore unnatural – this assumption is incorrect. Being in the minority does not equal being unnatural. Being part of a minority, (for example, those with a rare blood type) doesn't make a person unnatural. Foucault, a great thinker about sexuality, argued that calling something unnatural is a very powerful way to control it and we can see from young people's stories that it is still being used to try to control their behaviour and thinking.

There is no evidence at all that same sex sexual attractions are unnatural. This belief has been denounced by the Australian Psychological Society (2006) which wrote that 'homosexuality is a normal, natural, and fixed sexual orientation'.

Whether sexual practices feel right for an individual is another thing. For heterosexuals, homosexual behaviour is likely to feel extremely uncomfortable or unnatural, similarly for same-sex attracted people, heterosexual behaviour is likely to elicit the same response. Homosexuality has been around a long time. It has existed and been talked and written about throughout history. It occurs naturally in all human societies no matter what their ethnicity and culture. In some cultures it has been treated as a problem and in others it has not, but it is always there. It is simply a recurring part of the normal range of human possibilities.

Scott Bidstrup, in his brief survey of homosexual behaviour among animals, wrote: 'Homosexuality in the animal kingdom is an undeniable fact. It is as natural as can be... Homosexuality is natural ... and it's high time we accepted that fact ... Same sex partners

engage in almost every conceivable means of sexual expression throughout the animal kingdom'.

The American Psychological Association in its Statement on Homosexuality in 1994-wrote: 'Homosexuality is not a matter of individual choice. Research suggests that the homosexual orientation is in place very early in the life cycle, possibly even before birth. It is found in about ten percent of the population, a figure which is surprisingly constant across cultures, irrespective of the different moral values and standards of a particular culture. Contrary to what some imply, the incidence of homosexuality in a population does not appear to change with new moral codes or social mores. Research findings suggest that efforts to repair homosexuals are nothing more than social prejudice garbed in psychological accouterments'.



## How young people outsmarted this belief

*I love being attracted to males!* I used to be in denial but then faced the truth and now it seems so natural and normal! It's great! Never been happier. Wilson 15 years

*Normality is a continuum,* there are varying degrees of it. Sarah 17 years

*At first I was uncomfortable,* but now it is as 'normal' to me as air is. Elliot 18 years

*I hope that in the future,* same sex attraction will be more common-place, accepted and not taboo. It may not be 'natural', but that's so totally beside the point, wearing clothes and driving cars isn't natural either, but no-one has any problems with that! Greg 16 years

*I first knew when I was little* - put it to the back of my mind ignored it tried to be 'normal'. I know I'm not straight now I love who I am and who I love and would never change it. I would die before lying about my sexuality. Jade 18 years

*Homosexuality isn't unnatural,* just uncommon. Will 17 years



## Owen's story

18 years

*I've been attracted to guys* for a long time. It would have to be about 4 years but I never told anyone until just this year. At first, I didn't want to know it was true. I mean, I wanted to fit in with the rest of society so much. I didn't want to be marked different. And I didn't want to believe that I was either. But since the beginning of this year ... I've opened up to a lot of people. And they all accept me for me, and the thing I find strange is that they seem to be coming up to me, telling me that they think they are bisexuals, or gay or even lesbians. It's good that they can be more comfortable about it too. It would get a lot of pressure off them, as it did for me. And now I'm the happiest in the world. Nothing can bring me down. And I like to feel that way. Maybe others can feel the same way I do.

## Shaun's story

16 years

*Well... ever since I can remember* I've always had more female friends than male friends, and that didn't bother me one bit, after all I was born after feminism had changed the world and I was just a kid. At the age of around about 12 or 13, puberty started to kick in, and I found myself getting weird feelings towards men. At that time I thought that was completely normal, however as I grew older those feelings grew stronger, but I never did act on them. Now I am 16, soon to be 17 and can't imagine myself any other way. I have come out to my friends and my mum and things are going fine. The reaction of most of my friends was great and the reception was better than I expected from my mother. I am lucky to have such great friends and family to support me and who I am.

## Useful links!

**Australian Psychological Society (APS) (2006). Sexual orientation and homosexuality:**  
[www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/12.5\\_10.asp](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/12.5_10.asp)

**American Psychiatric Association (APA) on Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality:**  
[www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm](http://www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm)



## Useful information

### NATIONAL

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (HREC) [this will take you to the HREC in your state]: [www.humanrights.gov.au/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/)  
Parents and friends of lesbians and gays [this site takes you to PFLAG in each state]: <http://www.pflag.org.au>  
Sexual health and Family Planning Australia [will take you through to organisations in each state] [www.fpa.net.au/](http://www.fpa.net.au/)  
Lesbians on the Loose magazine [www.lotl.com/](http://www.lotl.com/)  
Hares & Hyenas queer bookshop [based in Melbourne but books and magazines can be ordered online] <http://hares-hyenas.com.au/>  
Australian Lesbian & Gay Archives <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~alga/>  
OUTVIDEO [based in Melbourne but videos and DVDs can be ordered online] [www.outvideo.com.au/](http://www.outvideo.com.au/)

### VICTORIA

JOYFM Radio [www.joy.org.au](http://www.joy.org.au)  
The ALSO Foundation [www.also.org.au](http://www.also.org.au)  
Transgender Victoria <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~victrans/>  
Bi-Victoria [www.bi-victoria.org/](http://www.bi-victoria.org/)  
Rainbow Families Council of Victoria  
<http://www.rainbowfamilies.org.au/>  
Rainbow Network - lists of SSATY Social & Support Groups  
[www.rainbownetwork.net.au](http://www.rainbownetwork.net.au)

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

Gay and lesbian counselling and community service in NT  
[www.glccs.org.au/nt.html](http://www.glccs.org.au/nt.html)

### NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby [www.glr.org.au/](http://www.glr.org.au/)  
Twenty-ten [an organisation for the direct relief of poverty, distress, homelessness and destitution, of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) young people] <http://www.twenty10.org.au>

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Gay & Lesbian Equality Western Australia [www.galewa.asn.au/](http://www.galewa.asn.au/)  
Freedom Centre [for same sex attracted and transgender young people] <http://www.freedom.org.au/main/>  
Equality Rules [a guide to equality for gay men, lesbians and bisexuals under the law in WA] [www.equalityrules.info/](http://www.equalityrules.info/)

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia Lobby for equal rights for same sex couples  
[www.letsgetequal.org.au/](http://www.letsgetequal.org.au/)  
Bfriend [a state-wide programme in South Australia to provide support to anyone around same sex sexuality issues]  
[www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au/bfriend/links.htm](http://www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au/bfriend/links.htm)

### QUEENSLAND

Action, Reform, Change, Queensland <http://arcq.com.au/>  
Open Doors [for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people] [www.opendoors.net.au/](http://www.opendoors.net.au/)

### TASMANIA

Tasmanian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby <http://www.tglrg.org/>  
Working it Out [for lesbian gay bisexual; transgender and intersex young people] [www.workingitout.org.au/main.html](http://www.workingitout.org.au/main.html)

### CANBERRA

Good Process <http://www.aidsaction.org.au/content/goodprocess/index.htm>  
Gay and lesbian counselling and community service in NT  
[www.glccs.org.au/act.html](http://www.glccs.org.au/act.html)