

A CLOSET HALF FULL

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In the media, the term “coming out” is often either seen as this romanticized, groundbreaking moment where everyone accepts you, or as an aggressive rejection filled with alienation from friends and family. Either way, it usually happens all at once, where you feel as if the whole world knows who you are, and some sort of climax is reached. Everyone is made aware that you are now a part of the LGBTQ+ community. But for some people, this is not always the case.

I am bisexual. Which, yes, is a real thing, not just a pathway to being gay, or a way to look for attention from guys. These preconceived notions people have with bi people can make it even harder to come out, but that’s not what I’m writing about; instead, I’m writing to say that coming out is more complicated than telling everyone in your life at once.

I am, what some might say, half-out. My friends at college all know of my bisexuality, as well as most of my friends from high school, but no one in my family does. Coming out is complicated; there are layers to it. Sometimes it slips into a conversation with a new friend or an acquaintance, while in other situations you have to sit someone down and break it to them gently. The first situation is always the easiest, as it is usually early on in the relationship- they don’t really know you yet, and you don’t really know them, so who cares? They can’t get incredibly shocked, and you honestly couldn’t care less if they don’t accept it. But when it comes to people that you’ve known for years, it’s usually a completely different story.

For me, there were steps: I first came out to my friends from high school who I knew would be okay with it, then I let myself casually mention it to my college friends, as they did not know me too well yet, and it was more natural that way. The final, presently incomplete, step is telling my family, but the thought of coming out to them terrifies me.

Most kids know how their parents feel about certain controversial topics, and I’m no different, which is why I can’t come out to them.

My dad would have a hard time accepting it. He’d think it a phase, or I’m just doing it for attention. Of course, he’d eventually accept and love me no matter what, but I don’t think I could handle the uncomfortable tension of being invalidated.

My brother would be similar. He’d make some joke and call me a liar, thinking I just want to be “cool”, and nothing except me marrying a girl would convince him otherwise.

My sister would probably be the most accepting. But while she'd tell me to my face that she loves and accepts me, I know in her mind she too would believe the stigmatized notion that my bisexuality is just for the "clout".

My mom scares me the most. I know her opinion on people in the community, and she is the real reason I don't think I could ever come out to my family. She wouldn't accept it, she'd probably yell in disbelief, and she'd definitely deny, deny, deny. I know she'd never look at me the same way.

I don't want to put myself through all that.

Being both in and out of the closet at the same time is hard and confusing. It feels weird being your complete self around some people, but hiding a huge part of who you are around others. Faking who you are in front of your family takes an indescribable toll, and instills a specific type of fear; it holds you back from feeling comfortable dating or falling for a girl, as that would entail you having to tell them about your same sex significant other.

While I don't currently have any plans of coming out to my family anytime soon, it doesn't mean that I am not proud of who I am. I'm able to be my complete self with people that I am out to. Although I still have a lot of inner turmoil, I will never apologize for my sexuality. Don't get me wrong, I love and care about my family, but I am putting my own sanity and happiness over their invalidation of my sexuality. I have fully accepted this, and plan on continuing to live in this awkward sexual limbo until I feel ready. When to fully come out is my decision, and until I'm ready I will honor what I have left: a choice.