

Elementary  
School

Middle  
School

High  
School

# Personal Stories

I've always known I was a boy. My parents gave me a girl name, and want me to wear dresses, and play with dolls. But it's not who I am. I had short hair and so the other kids thought I was a boy. Until the teacher called me Katie. I begged her to call me Josh, but she refused.

I have two moms. When the other kids make paintings for their dads for Father's Day, some kids make fun of me because I don't have a dad. They also say my nana isn't really my mom because she has dark skin and I don't. There are other kids who don't have dads either...some kids just have one mom, and I know we don't have to look the same to be a family!

I'm a boy, and I like to do ballet. When we had a talent show I wanted to dance. My teacher thought it would be better if I just performed a magic trick or something, like the other boys were going to.

Sometimes on the playground kids call me really mean names – like “AIDS face” or “Beaner.” I don’t know what those things mean, but I can tell those kids don’t like me. Maybe they’re afraid because I’m HIV positive.

From when I was seven until I was nine my mom's boyfriend lived with us. He would get drunk and try to touch my penis and make me touch his. I've never told anyone.



A while ago I got this huge crush on another girl. I didn't know what was going on or what was happening to me. Our relationship was so intense and exciting, but we had to keep it all a secret.

A boy on my soccer team wanted to fool around with me after practice. It felt good, but I was caught off guard. He was nothing like the gay people on TV and neither am I.

I had a girlfriend who threatened me all the time. She said she would tell everyone I was a bisexual if I wouldn't do what she wanted. There was no one I could tell.

When we started to have to dress down for PE class, that was the worst. I didn't want anyone to see I was growing breasts. I would have given anything to be a regular guy and get dressed in the locker room where I felt comfortable.

I'm a girl, and a while ago my body started to grow hair in places it wasn't supposed to and my clitoris started growing, almost like a penis. I was so afraid someone would find out I was a total freak.

My parents found out I had a boyfriend, they took me to this shrink to try to make me change. They believed being gay was a sin. Then they told me I was no longer welcome in their house. I ended up on the street.

I meet other gay guys online. It's easier, because no one at school knows I'm gay. I'd probably be killed if anyone found out. Sometimes I meet up with guys and have sex. People talk a lot about gay men and HIV, but I'm not too worried, because the people I meet seem healthy.

At my school the Gay Straight Alliance is the second most popular club at the school. We organized for Day of Silence last year, and it really got people's attention. Most teachers have those "Hate Free Zone" posters in their rooms so people know they're not supposed to say racist or homophobic slurs. It still happens but I think it's less than other schools.



I read on the internet that trans kids can get hormone blockers. If they take them before they get too far in puberty their bodies won't change. My mom is considering letting me do it, but she hasn't said yes for sure.

One of my friends just got pregnant. She's a lesbian, but she had this fake boyfriend so people wouldn't harass her. I don't think she expected to have sex, so she didn't think about birth control or anything.

My girlfriend and I were going to go to prom together, but the school got upset about the idea of a girl wearing a tuxedo and taking another girl, so they cancelled the whole thing. I'm afraid to even go to school because people are saying I ruined the prom.

# Teaching Points/Learning

# Opportunities

**There aren't any "girl colors and boy colors" or "girl games and boy games." Those are stereotypes of what you have to like to be a girl or a boy. It's OK to be different.**

**Families come in all different shapes and sizes, including, among many others, two-mommy and two-daddy families and families with no kids at all (just grown-ups). Some people are born into their family and some are adopted or fostered or “just” loved into their family. What makes a group of people a family is that they love and take care of one another.**

**It is wrong to call people names or put them down ... for any reason, including being gay. If you hear students use words like “fag” or “dyke,” it’s perfectly appropriate to add:** Words like “*fag*” and “*dyke*” are mean. The respectful words are “*gay*” and “*lesbian*.” A “*gay*” man is someone who loves another man best of all. A “*lesbian*” woman is someone who loves another woman best of all. “*Heterosexuals*” are people whose dearest love is of a different sex – a man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man. People are “*bisexual*” or “*bi*” if they can fall in love with a woman *or* a man.

**A “*stereotype*” is a mental picture you have of someone just because they belong to a certain group of people.** For example, some people might think that all teenagers like a certain kind of music. That’s not true, but it probably isn’t hurtful. Still, it’s a stereotype.

**A *prejudice*” is a negative or hurtful stereotype.**

**You can't tell if people are bisexual or gay or lesbian by how they look or act.** Only some people fit the stereotypes; that's what makes them stereotypes. Some people who *aren't* gay also fit stereotypes about gay people. It's OK to be a gay or lesbian or bisexual person and fit those stereotypes, but many people don't.

**If you hear somebody put down gay people – or *any* people – you can tell them you think it's mean (unfair, unkind) and you can ask them to stop using “gay” as a put-down. If you hear students use**



**terms like “That’s so gay!” you can say: It’s not ok to say “*That’s so gay!*” to mean that you don’t like something. It shows prejudice and it might hurt people ... maybe somebody whose mom or dad or another family member or friend is gay. We all probably know someone gay, even if we don’t realize it.**

**Someone who feels as if their body is a sex other than the one they were assigned at birth might call themselves “*transgender*.” This is different from being bisexual, gay or lesbian. Most gay, lesbian, and bisexual people don’t think they are or want to be the other sex.**

**Most people have 2 sex chromosomes (XX if they’re a girl and XY if they’re a boy); some don’t. There’s a lot of diversity in people’s bodies and they aren’t all exactly the typical way you see in**

puberty videos. If a person's body isn't exactly the way doctors expect a boy's body to be or the way they expect a girl's body to be – if their chromosomes or hormones or reproductive system are different – they might be what's called "*intersex*."

**Gay men and lesbians are usually just as respectful of children and others as heterosexuals are.** There's a stereotype that gay men molest children. That's nonsense. Most child molesters are heterosexual. Another stereotype is that gay people "recruit" or "come on" to heterosexuals. That doesn't make sense. A person would just be setting themselves up for rejection if they flirted with someone who clearly wasn't interested.

**We don't know why some people are gay, lesbian or bisexual and others are heterosexual. Or why some of us are trans and some aren't.** It may have something to do with your genes or your mom's hormones before you were born and it might be partly developed after birth. But we know it's *not* whether you got abused or how you feel about your parents that causes you to be gay or straight.

**All people who have sex – no matter what sex or gender or sexual orientation they are -- need to know how to make it safer. Gay and bisexual guys are more likely than average to ever have an HIV positive partner, and that partner may not know that he's HIV-positive, so they need to be *especially* careful about prevention.**

**Some lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) people have made incredible contributions to this world.**

They've been scientists, diplomats, athletes, artists, soldiers and human rights activists. Some of the people in your history books were LGBTQ, but you never learned that about them either because of the prejudices of the people who wrote those books or because the person lived at a time when people didn't understand or talk about sexual diversity.





**There are LGBTQ people in all walks of life, of every race, rich and poor, old and young, all over the world.** You know some, although you may not realize it if they don't happen to fit stereotypes or act out like the people on daytime talk-shows. They're part of our schools, workplaces, families, faith communities, sports teams, social service clubs, etc.

Your ***biological sex*** is the way your body was made. But some people's bodies are different from the typical male or female; they're still male or female but they have important differences, too. They might have XXY chromosomes instead of the typical XX of a girl or XY of a boy. Or they might have been born with a reproductive system that looked different from other babies'. They're ***intersex***; a doctor might say they had a “**disorder of sexual development**” or a **DSD**. Your ***gender identity*** is who you feel you are on the *inside* (male, female, both, neither, flexible).



Your ***gender expression*** has to do with how you act on the outside (how you walk, talk, sit, dress, etc. ... whether you're more masculine, feminine, some of both). Some folks call themselves ***transgender*** or ***trans*** because they were assigned one sex at birth, but are emotionally and spiritually another. Other ***trans*** people have just never really fit people's expectations about how boys or girls are supposed to act.

Your ***sexual orientation*** has to do with whom you mostly find sexually and emotionally and romantically attractive (of any gender).

***Heterosexual*** (straight) people like or fall in love mostly with people of a different gender – guys who like girls and vice versa. If a guy likes other guys best, he may call himself ***gay***. A girl who gets crushes mostly on other girls may consider herself ***lesbian***. Somebody who could fall in love with a girl *or* a guy is ***bisexual*** or *bi*.

**Most experts say that you can't change your sexual orientation or gender identity through therapy.** Some people have changed their behavior, especially if they were bisexual to begin with and wanted to live heterosexual lives. But there's no proof that therapy can make a person's sexual *feelings* or feelings of *love* disappear or effect whether they feel like a boy or a girl on the inside. Of course, many people wouldn't want their feelings to disappear.

**It is currently *not* against the law to discriminate against sexual minority people in most parts of the United States. In 30 states a person can be fired, denied service in restaurants, or lose their homes just for being gay, lesbian or bisexual. In 43 states, a person can be fired for being Transgender. Like women, union workers, various communities of color and people with disabilities, there's a long proud ongoing history of struggle for equal rights for GLBT people.**





**LGBTQ people have suffered from violence and discrimination globally. In the U.S. about 5 LGBTQ individuals -- mostly young trans people of color – are killed in brutal hate crimes every year.**

**There are laws in the U.S. and in some other countries which discriminate against LGBTQ individuals and families.** According to a June, 2009 report by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, homosexuality is a crime in more than 80 countries [though not in the United States]. In some places that includes consenting sex between adults in the privacy of their own home ... and in some places just attending a same-sex wedding.

**An LGBTQ equality & human rights movement has grown internationally since the 1950's. As with most social justice movements, youth have often led the way. See ways youth can work for change:**

→ American Civil Liberties Union: <http://gbge.aclu.org/>

→ Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere:

<http://www.colage.org/programs/youth/>

→ Gay Straight Alliance Network: <http://www.gsanetwork.org/>

→ International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/content/takeaction/index.html>

→ Lambda Legal:

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/out-safe-respected/>

→ Safe Schools Coalition:

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/volunteer.html>

→ Youth Resource: <http://www.youthresource.com/>