

You're Not Alone



No Matter What You Hear,
No Matter How Things Seem,
You Are Not Alone.

FUNDED BY : AIDS TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, FRUITS IN SUITS, LOTTERYWEST,
COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE



You're Not Alone

Copyright: 'Here for Life'
Youth Sexuality Project
1997, WA AIDS Council.
Not to be reprinted or
reproduced without
permission.

*Special thanks to all the
young people who shared
themselves through the
comments and photographs
in this book.*

Produced by the 'Here for Life'
Youth Sexuality Project Team:
Graham Brown, Pia Coates and
Melissa Gillett.

A joint project of the Gay
and Lesbian Counselling
Service (WA) and the WA
AIDS Council. Funded by the
Commonwealth Department
of Health and Family
Services 'Here for Life'
Youth Suicide Prevention
Initiative.

Thanks to all the young
people at the Freedom
Centre, Breakaway, Groovy
Girls, Other Voices, 1526,
Parents and Friends of
Lesbians and Gays (WA), the
youth workers and
counsellors and everyone else
who assisted with this book.

Revised and Reprinted by
Freedom Centre staff and
volunteers 2003

Photography by Nadine
Toussaint – ph: 0412 866 658
nadtoussaint@hotmail.com

Design by Lauren Willhelm,
Designmine Pty Ltd

Growing up in a world that seems to revolve around being attracted to the opposite sex can be tough when you are thinking about liking people of the same sex.

No wonder when people start to identify their feelings for the same sex, life can become rather confusing and complicated. Who do you turn to? What information do you need? Where can you go? Are these feelings OK?

All of us involved with this book have gone through these feelings and experiences. It can be overwhelming when you start to realise that you might be attracted to people who are the same sex as you. And in a world where almost everything is geared towards people who are attracted to the opposite sex, finding information can be difficult. We hope this book helps clarify your feelings and provides you with some information and support.

When reading through this book, there are three things to consider :

- It's OK to be attracted to someone of the same sex. Being attracted to people of the same sex is a natural and healthy way to be.
- You're not alone. There are thousands of young people who have been through this and many more wondering about their sexuality and whether they are the only one.

It takes time to know who you are. It is OK to question your sexuality, it's OK to be unsure and it's OK to take your time. Many young people have similar feelings to you, it is all part of finding out about yourself.

In this book we have gathered together the most common questions asked about being attracted to someone of the same sex, or about gay, lesbian and bisexual people and attempted to provide some answers.

You have taken a big step just by choosing to read this book. Feel proud of yourself and trust your feelings.

If you'd like to talk to someone about your feelings, get more information about sexuality or gender expression or would like to meet other young people who feel the same, you can call (08) 9482 0000 or write to The Freedom Centre, PO Box 1510, West Perth 6872 or email info@freedom.org.au.

"I suppose I see the people around me in two groups, those who can understand and cherish who I am and my sexuality, and those that are not yet that lucky." Trish, 18

"I always felt different, it was not until later I found a name for how I felt. For me, being gay is being 100% me, not just 50% me." David, 19

"I felt really alone and afraid for so long. I tried to ignore my feelings and pretend to be someone else. Then I met other gays and lesbians who were happy, successful, and were achieving their dreams. I knew I could too!" Peter, 20

"I didn't know who I was or what I was about. I didn't think there was any point to my life. Then I found some info, and met other lesbians and gay guys who felt good about themselves. I could talk about my feelings and my questions with other young people who felt the same." Angela, 17



Before we get started we'd like to clarify the meaning of some of the words used in this book.

Heterosexual : People whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the opposite sex.

Homosexual : People whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the same sex. People who feel this way often identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Gay : People whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the same sex. In Australia this can mean men or women, though tends to be used mainly for men who identify themselves as gay.

Lesbian : Women whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for other women.

Bisexual or Bi : Refers to people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for both men and women.

Homophobia : An individual's or society's misunderstanding, ignorance or fear of gay, lesbian or bisexual people.

Transgender : People who do not identify with the sex or gender with which they were born with. This has to do with the feeling of not being born into the right physical body.

Coming Out : A phrase that can mean something different to everyone. It has to do with developing an awareness that you are gay, lesbian or bisexual. This often leads to being more open with others about sexual identity.

Sexual Orientation and Sexuality : The direction of sexual and romantic attractions. For some this is mainly towards people of the opposite sex, for some it is mainly towards people of the same sex and for some it is towards either sex.

Queer : A term encompassing many different alternative sexualities and gender identities: bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgendered, straight etc.

I Think I Might Be Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual; But What If I Don't Know For Sure?

You'll know when you know. It could take a while, and there's no need to rush.

Some gay, lesbian or bisexual people say that from the time they were very young they "felt different". They had crushes on friends of their own gender – and no one seemed to be talking about that. Often it took a while to put a name to their feelings – to begin to think of themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. But when they started thinking in those words, it made sense – it fitted in with the feelings they had growing up.

Many people don't begin to discover their sexual attraction until much later into adulthood and it can be just as confusing then.

At some point, almost everybody gets a "crush" on someone of the same sex like a great teacher or a friend's older sister or brother. Your closest relationship may be your best friend of the same sex. But none of that means you're gay, lesbian or bisexual.

One or two sexual experiences with someone of

the same sex may not mean you're gay, lesbian or bisexual either – just as one or two sexual experiences with someone of the opposite sex may not mean you're exclusively heterosexual.

You do not need to be sexually active with other people to recognise or understand your sexuality. Your feelings and your emotional and physical attractions will help tell you who you are.

Your sexuality will become clearer over time. Don't worry if you aren't sure. Being young is a time of figuring out what works for you and strong feelings and experimentation are often part of that. In time, you'll find that you're drawn mostly to men or to women or to both – and you'll know then. You don't have to label yourself today or ever.

"I guess it is hard to know. You've just got to go with your gut feeling – it's generally right." Leah, 18

"Be very honest with yourself – who do you love? Who could you love? I did a lot of reading before I realised it about myself."

Adam, 21

Am I The Only One With These Feelings?

There are thousands of other people who feel attracted to people of the same sex as themselves. They live across the nation and worldwide and are a part of every culture's history. You are not the only one.

Many people think of sexuality as a range of sexual orientations. At one end of the range are people who are attracted only to the same sex, at the other end of the range are people who are attracted only to the opposite sex, and at various stages in between are people who are attracted to both sexes.

So, wherever you are on that continuum, you are clearly not alone. Some estimates say that one in every ten people is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Estimates vary depending on how comfortable people are in reporting their feelings in a survey.

"There are gay, lesbian or bisexual people all around you – you just can't always tell who they are. There are so many gay people who are not "obvious" that it is easy to forget they are there. Being gay is natural because you are following the instincts nature gave you." Adam, 21

Is It Natural To Be Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual?

Being gay, lesbian or bisexual is as natural, normal and healthy as being heterosexual. The vast majority of psychologists and psychiatrists consider it unethical and unrealistic to

try to change a person's sexual orientation (USA Psychiatric Association; USA Psychological Association; British Psychiatric Association)

Why Do I Feel Attracted To People Of My Own Sex?

Young people often ask, "Why am I attracted to people of the same sex?" It's interesting that not many people ask, "Why am I attracted to people of the opposite sex?" The answer is the same to both of these questions

Our society is often looking for a cause for something that is different so that it can be "fixed". Being attracted to people of the same sex is not something that needs to be fixed, in the same way that being attracted to someone of the opposite sex is not something that needs to be fixed.

We live in a world that often fears and questions difference. This is the reason for racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. Being young and different can be hard, but everyone is different in some way.

Being attracted to people of the same sex is just one part of who you are.



I Thought Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual People Acted In Certain Ways. If I Don't Fit A Stereotype, Am I Still Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual?

"I don't seem to fit into any stereotypes, but that is okay. If people don't approve of me not fitting in, it is their problem. And if people think I'm not gay because I don't fit a stereotype, well I guess I'll have to start a new stereotype all for myself!"
Leah, 18

"I was amazed at the diversity of gay people."
Adam, 21

Gay, lesbian or bisexual people, like all people are diverse. Gay, lesbian or bisexual people are young and old, Asian, Aboriginal, European, African and from every other nationality, religion and culture. They may be deaf, or use a wheel chair. They are construction workers, teachers, doctors, students, secretaries, business people, police officers, politicians and athletes.

Stereotypes and myths exist because of ignorance and assumptions. Some people fit stereotypes, some don't. Trust your feelings and be yourself.

Many of the stereotypes and misunderstandings

are about sexuality and sex. We often hear that gay men want to be women and lesbians want to be men. This is confusing sexuality with issues about gender.

Transgender (or transexual) people do not identify with the sex or gender they were born with. This has to do with the feeling of not being born into the right physical body. Confusion about one's gender is a very real issue, but does not necessarily have anything to do with sexuality or sexual orientation. Being gay, lesbian or bisexual doesn't make you transexual or transgender, and being transexual or transgender doesn't make you gay, lesbian or bisexual. If you are dealing with confusion about your gender, this can be a very confronting time. There are many services you can contact to help you with these feelings. The information in this book may also assist you. For further support, information and other contacts, call your local Gay and Lesbian Community Services (see contacts list at the back of this booklet).

Famous Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual or Gay People

Patrick White, Australian author

Robyn Archer, Australian singer

Ian Roberts, Australian rugby player with Super League

Giz Watson, Western Australian Member of Parliament

Dr Bob Brown, Australian Federal Senator

Monique Brumby, Australian Singer

K.D. Lang, singer

Kerryn Phelps, Australian Medical Association President

Hon. Justice Michael Kirby, Supreme Court Judge

Sir Robert Helpmann, dancer and choreographer

Julie McCrossin, ABC TV presenter

Molly Meldrum, rock music commentator

Michaelangelo, artist

Billie Jean King, pro tennis champion

Elton John, pop star

Melissa Ethridge, singer

Rock Hudson, actor

Martina Navratilova, pro tennis champion

Vita Sackville-West, author

Roddy Bottum, keyboardist of Faith No More

Janis Joplin, singer

David Bowie, rock star and actor

Isabel Miller, author

Boy George, pop star

Amanda Bearse, actress

Indigo Girls, musicians

Cole Porter, songwriter

William S. Burroughs, novelist

Sophie B Hawkins, singer

Joan Baez, singer

Midge Costanza, White House aid to USA President Carter,

William Yang, Australian photographer

Dorothy Allison, novelist

Quentin Crisp, writer, actor and humorist

Ellen DeGeneres, comedian

Greg Louganis, actor & three-time Olympic gold medalist in diving

Susan Love, breast-cancer surgeon

Oscar Wilde, writer

Virginia Woolf, writer

Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Churches

Sandra Bernhard, comedian

Christopher Smith, member of the British Parliament

Gertrude Stein, writer

Christopher Ciccone, artist and set designer; brother of Madonna,

Craig Claiborne, food writer

Karen Clark, Minnesota state legislator

John Corigliano, classical composer

Michelle Crone, comedian

Gasparino Damata, Brazilian writer

Justin Fashanu, British pro soccer star

Jean-Paul Gaultier, French fashion designer

Sir John Gielgud, award-winning actor

Bruce Hayes, Olympic gold medallist in swimming

Nona Hendryx, pop singer

Bob and Rod Jackson-Paris, pro models/bodybuilders

Marc Jacobs, fashion designer

Judi Conelli, Singer/Actor

Paul Capps, Performer

Jimmy Somerville, Singer/songwriter

Freddy Mercury, singer

Liberace, pianist and entertainer

Peter Wherret, Australian racing driver and TV personality

Peter Allan, Australian singer/songwriter/entertainer

David Marr, Australian journalist

Rita May Brown, writer

Portia De Rosia, actor

John Hyde, politician

Brian Greig, politician

Bob Downe, actor

Rupert Everett, actor

Alan Turing, computer inventor

Prince Heinrich of Prussia

Frederick the Great

Pjotr Iljitch Tchaikovsky, composer

Alexander the Great, ancient conqueror

E.M. Forster, writer

Sappho, ancient poet

James Baldwin, writer

Rudolf Nureyev, dancer

Marlene Dietrich, actress

Mykal Judge, priest

George Michael, singer

Cary Grant, actor

AND MANY, MANY MORE...



Things You Hear About Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People

MYTH : Gay men and lesbians do not have long term relationships.

FACT : Gay, lesbian and bisexual relationships do work. Long term partnerships are not rare at all. Many long term same sex couples may not access gay venues or frequent "the scene" and therefore are not as visible to the community.

MYTH : Gay, lesbian and bisexual people grow up to be lonely old people.

FACT : Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals do develop long lasting relationships and friendships. Many gay, lesbian and bisexual people do have children. Also, many gay lesbian & bisexual people have good relationships with their families.

MYTH : Gay men are more likely to sexually abuse children.

FACT : The vast majority of child sexual abuse occurs heterosexually and is usually associated with the home environment.

MYTH : Homosexuality is contagious.

FACT : People cannot "catch" a sexuality. People cannot be "recruited" to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

MYTH : Bisexuals just can't make up their mind.

FACT : The point is they have! Sexuality is a range between exclusively gay and exclusively heterosexual, and many people are naturally in between. Everyone has a right to be who they are.

MYTH : Lesbians do not get Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs).

FACT : Lesbians are diverse, practice a wide range of sexual activities and can get STIs.

MYTH : All gay men get AIDS.

FACT : AIDS is not a gay men's disease. No virus is smart enough to be able to tell what a person's sexuality is. It is the safety of the activities that a person practises that places him or her at risk of HIV infection.

MYTH : All gay men have anal sex.

FACT : Gay men are diverse, and have preferences like anyone else. Some practice anal sex, some do not.

There is no such thing as gay, lesbian or bisexual hair, shoes, clothes or jobs.



Will I Ever Have Sex? Will I Ever Have A Relationship?

You may have a lot of mixed feelings about having sex and/or having a relationship with someone else. This is normal for everyone. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people do have positive sexual relationships and experiences that include genuine feelings of affection and pride in their sexual identity. The more you are able to value yourself, take your time, and use your best judgement, the more satisfying your sexual experiences are likely to be.

Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs)

If you choose to have sex with someone, regardless of whether they are the same sex or opposite sex to you, you should think about STIs, including HIV / AIDS.

Same sex couples who have safe sex are at no greater risk of STIs than heterosexual couples who have safe sex. To find out about safe sex practises for same sex couples contact your local STI/AIDS council (see

contact list at the end of this booklet.

Remember :

- you cannot tell by looking at someone if they have a STI; and
- always use protection, such as a condom, dam (square piece of latex) or latex gloves with water based lubricant to keep both you and your partner safe.

If you think you may have contracted an STI or HIV, there are places you can go (if you do not feel comfortable seeing your family doctor) for testing, treatment, counselling and support.

What About The Law?

As the law stands now, the following applies :

In Western Australia:

- it is legal for couples of the same sex to show affection in public, in the same way as it is legal for heterosexual couples to show affection in public;
- it is illegal to have sexual intercourse in public places, regardless of whether it is between a man and woman, or between people of the same sex.

The age of consent

- is 16 years for any person engaging in sexual intercourse, in private. Regardless of their gender or sexuality.
- varies in different states, so it is important to check out what the laws are in your local area.

Equal Opportunity

- Sexual orientation is grounds for protection under the Equal Opportunity Act. This means that you cannot be discriminated against for being gay or lesbian.

The following resources can provide you with more information:

Equal Opportunity Commission

(08) 9216 3900 / 1800 198 149

www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Gay & Lesbian Equality

www.galewa.asn.au

For an up to date guide to the law relating to gay, lesbian and bisexual people in Western Australia check out:
www.equalityrules.info.au

Youth Legal Service

08 9202 1688 /
1800 199 006

You may wish to contact one of the following groups in Perth to get more information and resources. Information for other states is at the back of this booklet.

WA AIDS Council

(08) 9482 0000

Gay and Lesbian Community Services

(08) 9420 7201

Freedom Centre

(08) 9228 0354

FPWA

(08) 9227 6871

AIDSline

(08) 9429 9944

Quarry Youth Health Centre

(08) 9430 4544

Or your nearest Sexual Health Clinic

What About Religion?

"No matter what people say, you are normal. God created you, and you were made in this image. You have a purpose, and being gay, lesbian or bisexual is only part of it."
Nathan, 19.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual people have a wide range of spiritual and religious beliefs.

Some religious institutions are coming to accept the idea that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are part of their congregation and therefore should be allowed to worship.

If this is an important issue to you or your family, there is a list of books at the end of this booklet you may wish to read to assist in exploring and developing your beliefs and understandings.

Your local Gay and Lesbian Community Services can help you find faith communities who welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual people.





How Can I Deal With People Who Hassle Me Because They Think I Am Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual?

Some people in society can sometimes discriminate and is even violent towards people who are seen to be different. However, attitudes about sexuality have been, over time, changing for the better and are more positive in many places. There are also many groups working

to make things better for everyone.

No matter the reason, whether you are at school, work, TAFE, University, movies, shopping or just hanging out, harassment and abuse should not be tolerated. However this does not mean you have to take it on by yourself. There are factors like your own safety and well being to consider.

Some suggestions include:

- tell friends you trust,
- report it to someone in authority,

- call the W.A. Gay and Lesbian Community Services (08) 9420 7201

- call the W.A. Police Diversity Unit (08) 9356 0510

Everyone needs to think about their safety. Sometimes it is easier to ignore people who try to hassle you. However, always remember, you have a right to feel and be safe. Nobody deserves violence or harassment, you are not responsible for other people's attitudes.

I Get Really Depressed Sometimes...

"When I am depressed my mind is like a prison decorated with disappointment, frustration, pain, boredom and sadness. But it is also positive as it gets me to question whether I want to be alone and fearful. It gives me the courage to reach out for what I really want from life." Owen, 19

It's not easy to realise that you may be or are gay, lesbian or bisexual. We all hear the terrible jokes, the hurtful stereotypes and the wrong ideas that circulate about gay, lesbian or bisexual people.. We may worry that we are not normal. We may worry that people will find out about our

feelings. We all tend to fear or hate what we don't understand.

The majority of people who have accepted their sexuality and themselves are happy and would not want to be any other way.

Acknowledging a part of yourself that goes against what most people feel comfortable with is a brave thing to do. Being

Do I Have To Be Part Of The Gay, Lesbian Or Bisexual Community Or "Scene"?

It is up to you how much you get involved in the activities that are part of gay, lesbian and bisexual communities. You don't have to expect that you will form deep bonds of

friendship with every gay, lesbian or bisexual person you meet. Nor do you have to abandon non-gay, lesbian or bisexual friends, your existing lifestyle and interests or anything else.

Interacting with other people dealing with similar feelings may help to clarify your experiences and thoughts. There is a wide variety of activities in which gay, lesbian and

bisexual people are involved, from bootscooting, outdoor activities and art events to "clubbing". It is often best to join in with the activities that you think you will enjoy.

"I see the community as a smorgasbord of activities. I pick things I want to do and leave things on the table for others to enjoy. I don't like everything on offer."
Sally, 20

courageous does not mean you aren't scared.

Even when you are comfortable with your same sex attractions and feelings, life may continue to present problems and challenges. Don't judge yourself for feeling depressed or scared.

Many young people dealing with their sexuality have joined groups, participated in courses or called the Gay and Lesbian Community Services. They found that meeting or talking to other young people with the same experiences helped them to feel less alone. Having the support of people who understand can help you feel better about yourself.

hurting ourselves. We may feel very isolated, fearful, and depressed, especially if we have not talked to anyone about our feelings.

If you are feeling depressed, afraid or thinking of hurting yourself, talk to a trusted person about your feelings or call one of these numbers

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

Crisis Care
(08) 9325 1111

Samaritans YouthLine
(08) 9388 2500 /
1800 198 313

Gay and Lesbian Community Services (08) 9420 7201

"Things that work for me when I am feeling down: going for a walk; spending time doing something I enjoy; ringing or visiting a good friend; seeking out counselling if I need to talk." Rachael, 19

When we feel like we have to hide who we really are, it can make us feel like

You don't have to work through it alone. Many gay, lesbian and bisexual people have thought about suicide, but through seeking assistance and support are now happy with their sexuality



I Think I have Something to Tell You...

Questions To Consider Before Telling Someone About Your Feelings And Sexuality

"I think coming out is a combination of admitting to yourself and confiding in friends or family that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or just feel attracted to people of the same sex as you."

Leah, 18

"To me, coming out is about discovering and accepting your real self, and then maybe sharing the discovery with others later. It's never ending, frightening, exciting and ultimately rewarding because you are being true to yourself and the people you care for."

Adam, 21

People Mean When They Talk About "Coming Out"?

The term "coming out" is used by many people, and means something different to everyone.

It has to do with realising you are attracted to people of the same sex, perhaps calling yourself gay, lesbian or bisexual and perhaps deciding to tell others about your feelings.

As you start to listen to your deepest feelings and learn more about what it means to have these feelings you will begin to be comfortable with your sexuality.

For some this process is simple and straightforward; for others it is difficult. For all of us it is a learning experience.



Many people involved in this book have decided to tell someone significant about their feelings. Others have had a loved one share their feelings with them. From all their experiences we have gathered some suggested questions and points you may want to consider before telling someone close to you.

Remember, everyone's situation is unique, and everyone's family is different. You need to think about these suggestions in light of your own personal situation.

1. How sure are you about your sexual attractions and sexuality?

"Are you sure?" is one of the most common questions you will be asked. Whether the answer is yes, no or maybe, you need to be able to respond with confidence to the question.

2. How comfortable are you with your sexuality?

If you are having feelings of guilt or depression, seek some help in understanding those feelings before coming out to family. There are contact numbers at the end of this book.

3. Do you have support?

If your family's reaction may devastate you, you need to find someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. You may want to contact your nearest Gay and Lesbian Community Services for some suggestions.

4. Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?

People's response will generally be based on stereotypes and myths about gay, lesbian or bisexual people. Doing some reading on the subject will increase your ability to share more accurate information. There is a list of books on page 19 that you may be interested in reading. Many of these books can be accessed from your local library or at the Freedom Centre.

5. Do you have available resources?

Being attracted to the same sex is a subject most people know little about. One of the following may be useful:

- a book addressed to parents (A free book called *Someone You Love* is available from the organisations listed at the back of this book),
- the contact number for your nearest Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays group.
- the name of a counsellor who will be unbiased. Your nearest Gay and Lesbian Community Service organisation can make some suggestions.

6. What is the mood at home?

If you have the choice of when to tell, consider the timing. Try not to tell people during an argument or use the issue as a weapon. This will only distance people and catch them during an

aggressive and defensive moment.

7. Can you be patient?

People often require time to deal with this information if they haven't considered it prior to your sharing. If you decide to tell someone close to you, be prepared to give them time to adjust and to comprehend the new information about you. Try to hang in there while they get over the initial shock of finding out they did not know everything about you.

8. Are you financially dependent on the people you want to tell?

If you suspect they are capable of withdrawing any financial support or forcing you out of where you live, you may choose to wait until they do not have this pressure to hold over you. You need to think about the advantages and disadvantages.

9. What is their general views about gay, lesbian or bisexual people?

Depending on your relationship with someone, you may already have a good idea about their views and feelings on sexuality and its diversity. Use this knowledge to consider how much information and support you may need if you decide to tell them about your feelings.

10. Is it your decision to tell someone?

Yes. The decision should be yours, however this is not always the case. Try not to feel pressured by people who think that "everyone must come out" or by snooping people who ask unwelcome questions.

"I only tell other people that I'm gay if I've known them for a long time and if they are accepting and tolerant. I think it's important that they know about this special part of me." **Jake, 18**

"You shouldn't feel pressured to tell anyone at all until you are comfortable with the idea of being a lesbian yourself. Be prepared that people's reactions will vary." **Tammi, 18**

"Only tell someone if you feel you have enough support to face what may happen. Try to tell someone if you think you can't deal with these feelings alone anymore. If you think your family might flip out, tell someone who might be more impartial." **Sarah, 19**

"When I told a couple of my friends, I told them I was no different now than I was five minutes before I told them, except that now I wasn't keeping a big secret from them." **Terryle, 16.**

Reactions

The following may help you understand and respond to people's reactions.

Just as you are unique, so is everyone around you, and so they will all react differently. Some people will have no problem with your sexuality and be happy for you, some may have already suspected and were just waiting for you to tell them, while for others it will challenge their feelings towards you. They may feel angry, responsible or worried.

Allow them time and space. Shock, denial and feelings of guilt are often experienced by people when they are told someone close to them is gay, lesbian or bisexual. They may have experienced the same environment as you but possibly with very different feelings. You have probably given your sexuality a lot of thought, but it may be all new to them. Although the feelings they may work through are similar to those you've dealt with, the difference is that you're ahead of them in the process.

You may want them to understand and grasp this important part of your life right away and give you support. However, you may need to allow people time to express their own feelings. Be patient.

You may also need to explain things a few times. Just because you've said something once does not mean they heard it. Later they may be ready to ask questions, listen to answers and acknowledge their feelings.

Rejection

Some young people are rejected by the people they tell. This is a difficult situation to be part of. Remember you are sharing an important part of yourself. If people choose to ignore this they are missing out on knowing who you are. Hold onto the fact that you are special. Reach out for support.

If your family do ask you to leave home please contact one of the services on the next page.

Acceptance

Self acceptance and acceptance of others is something everyone would like. Many people love others without finally accepting their life. Many more reach the point where they can also celebrate everyone's uniqueness.

"I've often thought about what has transpired since then; I've looked upon it as an unplanned journey. It was thrust upon us; we'd hardly have signed up for it if given the option of choosing something else. Unplanned, however, does not mean unwelcomed. Today we can say "We're glad we know." We've been able to support our son on his journey. We hope that he can say, "Unplanned, but not unwelcome."

Father of a gay man

Congratulations !

We have just presented you with an enormous amount of information, some may be useful to you now and some may be more useful to you later. Well done for getting this far.

Understanding your sexuality is just one more step to understanding who you are. Sometimes this can be really difficult but you are not alone. Reach out for support when you need it and trust your feelings.

Book List

All of these books are available in Western Australian libraries and can be located online at www.liswa.wa.gov.au Many books and other resources are available at your nearest gay & lesbian organisation, P-FLAG, or through your local queer bookshop.

For Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth

Non-Fiction

Bauer, Marion Dane, (ed) *Am I Blue? Coming Out From The Silence*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Brash, Alan A. *Facing Our Differences: The Churches And Their Gay And Lesbian Members* Geneva WCC Publications, c1995.

Dillon, Michele Catholic Identity : *Balancing Reason, Faith, And Power*. Cambridge : New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Gilbert Herdt (ed) *Gay And Lesbian Youth*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1989.

Gray, Mary L. *In Your Face: Stories From The Lives Of Queer Youth* New York: Harrington Park, c1999.

Macleod, Mark *Ready or Not*, Random House, 1996

Pausacker Jenny (ed) *Hide And Seek: Stories About Being Young And Gay/Lesbian*. Port Melbourne: Mandarin, 1996.

Signorile, Michelangelo *Outing Yourself* Abacus, 1995

Scanzoni, Letha and Mollenkott, Virginia R *Is the Homosexual my Neighbour? A Positive Christian Response..* Harper San Francisco, 1994

Shale, Erin (ed) *Inside Out : An Australian Collection Of Coming Out Stories* Melbourne: Bookman Press, c1999.

Fiction

Baldwin, James (1988). *Giovanni's Room*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Brown, Rita Mae (1988). *Rubyfruit Jungle*. New York: Bantam.

Grima, Tony (ed) *Not The Only One: Lesbian And Gay Fiction For Teens* Alyson Publications, 1995.

Kerr, M. E. "Hello," *I lied: A Novel*

New York : Harper Collins Publishers, c1997.

Miller, Isabel (1985). *Patience And Sarah*. New York: Random House.

Salat, Cristina (1993). *Living In Secret*. New York: Bantam.

Sinclair, April (1994). *Coffee Will Make You Black*. New York: Hyperion.

Winterson Jeanette *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* London : Pandora Press, 1985.

For Family and Friends

Bernstein, Robert A *Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together* Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 1995

Marcus, Eric *Is It A Choice: Answers To 300 Of The Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gays And Lesbians*. San Francisco: Harper Collins. 1993

Someone You Love, 'Here for Life' Youth Sexuality Project. (1997) Contact P-FLAG WA.

Contact Numbers and Details

National

Kids Help Line
1800 55 1800
www.kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline
13 11 14 / 1300 13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

Reach Out!
Info@inspire.org.au
www.reachout.asn.au

AFAO
(02) 9281 1999
<http://www.afao.org.au>

Western Australia

Freedom Centre
08 9228 0354
info@freedom.org.au
www.freedom.org.au

Gay and Lesbian Community Services
(08) 9420 7201
admin@glcs.org.au
www.glcs.org.au

PFLAG – Perth
(08) 9228 1005
perth@pflag.org.au
www.pflag.org.au

WA AIDS Council
(08) 9482 0000
waac@waaidcs.com
www.waaidcs.com

The Samaritans Youthline
(08) 9388 2500 / 1800 198 313
jo@befrienders.org
www.thesamaritans.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Gay Information and Counselling Service
(02) 6247 2726

AIDS Action Council of the ACT (02) 6257 2855
aidsact@webone.com.au
www.aidsaction.org.au

New South Wales

2010
(02) 9552 6130 / 1800 65 2010
twenty10@rainbow.net.au
www.rainbow.net.au/~twenty10/

Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW
(02) 9207 2800 / 1800 18 4527
www.glcsnsw.org.au

AIDS Council of NSW
(02) 9206 2000
acon@acon.org.au
www.acon.org.au

Northern Territory

Gay & Bisexual Mens Line
Telephone Service 1800 181 888

Northern Territory AIDS Council
(08) 8941 1711 / 1800 880 899
info@ntac.org.au
www.ntac.org.au/ntac/

Queensland

Gay and Lesbian Welfare Assoc
(02) 9207 2800 / 1800 184 527
www.glwa.org.au

Queensland AIDS Council
(07) 3017 1777
info@quac.org.au
www.quac.org.au

South Australia

Inside Out (Second Story Youth Health Service)
(08) 8232 0233,
insideout@dhs.sa.gov.au

Gay & Lesbian Counselling Services
(08) 8362 3223 / 1800 182 233

glcs@glcssa.org.au
www.glcssa.org.au

Gay Men's Health (AIDS Council of SA)
(08) 8362 1617
or 1800 888 559,
gmhealth@gmhealth.org.au
www.aidsCouncil.org.au

Briend (Peer support for newly identifying gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and/or their parents: (08) 8202 5192 or (08) 8202 5802,
briend@acm.asn.au

The Care & Prevention Programme (integrated multidisciplinary primary health care for gay and bisexual men), 8231 4026,
mark@careandprevention.org

Tasmania

Gender & Sexuality Support Line
1800 633 900

Gay Information Line
(03) 6234 8179

Gay & Lesbian Community Centre
0500 808 031
glc@gaytas.org
www.gaytas.org

Tasmanian Council on AIDS and Related Diseases (TASCARD)
(03) 6234 1242
1800 005 900
mail@tascard.org.au
www.tascard.org.au

Working It Out – North West
(03) 6434 6474
wio_nw@bigpond.com

Working It Out – South
(03) 6234 6122
wio_south@bigpond.com

Victoria

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard
(03) 9827 8544
1800 184 527
glswitch@vicnet.net.au
www.vicnet.net.au/~glswitch

Also Foundation
(03) 9827 4999
also@also.org.au
www.also.org.au

Victorian AIDS Council: The Peter Knight Centre
(03) 9865 6700 / 1800 134 840
youthproject@vicaidcs.asn.au
www.vicaidcs.asn.au





You're Not Alone



FUNDED BY : AIDS TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, FRUITS IN SUITS, LOTTERYWEST,
COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE

AN INITIATIVE OF THE 'HERE FOR LIFE' YOUTH
SEXUALITY PROJECT 1997, WA AIDS COUNCIL.