

GET USED TO IT!

My story of finally escaping the closet

By Mary Beth Kaneklides

I believe there were several times that I attempted to come out; however, I did not know what “coming out” really meant.

Perhaps it began the time I tried to hug a girlfriend of mine when I was 3.

She screamed the most blood-hounding scream I had ever heard, and that still rings in my head today. I even remember the look she gave me when the teacher “rescued” her from my attempted embrace.

Or maybe it was the time in third grade when I pretended to be a boy and wrote a secret admirer note to my best friend. I knew from before that I had to be secretive of these feelings, although I didn’t know why. I watched her open the carefully worded letter with her small fingers, smiling to herself.

When she discovered the author was me and not “Jesse,” I had never seen her more angry.

Then I think about the time I created an internet identity of “m/18/CA” (Male, 18 years old, California resident) for chat rooms. I cybered with young women and enjoyed it. If they had only known I was a 15-year-old female in North Carolina ...

You could say I learned at a young age to hide these feelings. Most of us who haven’t come out do.

But when we do come out, we find that the game of pretend is finally over.

I came out during my sophomore year, when I was 20 years old. When I finally admitted that I was bisexual (and got over the idea that I was going to burn in hell for the rest of damnation), I had never felt so free. I remember walking down the street and feeling happier than I had ever remembered.

I was finally alright with being myself. I was ready to shout, “I’M HERE AND I’M QUEER!” all over the place.

I also remember the first time I experienced exclusion from my friends. Some high school friends of mine were having a pool party, and several people from past A.P. classes were going to be there.

But the host of the party told my best friend from high school that while she was invited, I no longer was.

“Why?” my friend asked.

“Because I’ve seen the choice that she made on Facebook. We have a Christian home and don’t want that kind of thing in our house. And we can’t have her at a pool party — there are going to be girls in bathing suits there!”

I remember crying so hard that night. I remember thinking, “I’m just like all of your other friends