

except I'm queer! I'm not even interested in what you look like in a bathing suit! I don't care!"

But it was what my best friend did that made such a difference to me. She told me that she wasn't going to the party. She didn't want anything to do with people who thought that about me.

I had another cry — this time it was a good one.

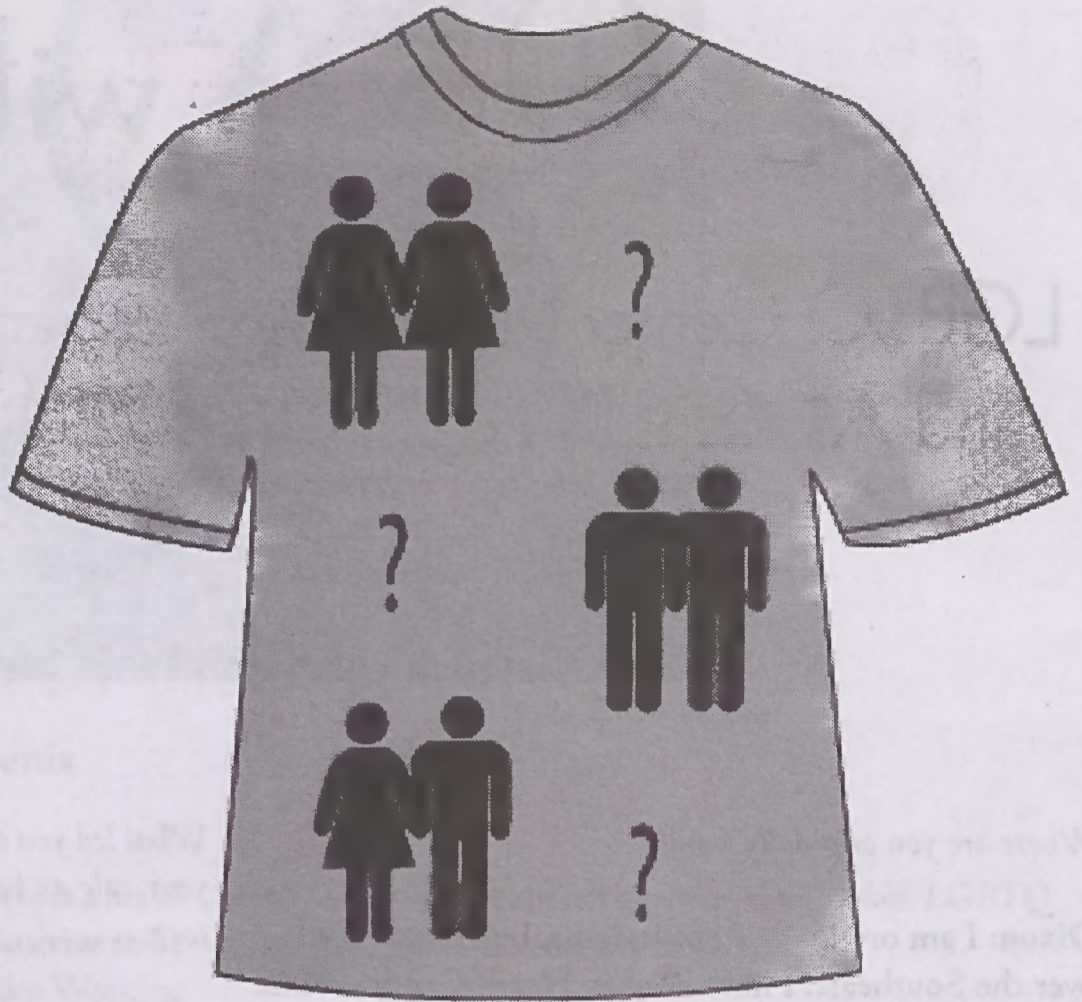
I have a cousin who I came out to in December who now won't talk to me. I had always been able to talk to her about anything and call her anytime — she was my role model.

Ever since I came out to her, though, she doesn't even acknowledge my existence. She doesn't call me, she doesn't ask about me. Still, I would never stay in the closet for her.

Coming out is a process. We can do it when we're ready. It's a daily activity for me.

When I wear "queer" t-shirts and see mothers of my violin students eyeing me suspiciously, I'm coming out. When observers stare at me and a table of queer people and we endure their sickening looks, I'm coming out. When I object to a ho-

rights."



I learned very quickly who my friends were and who they were not. I've always said since then that if someone doesn't love you for who you truly are, you're wasting your time. All LGBTIQ people, closeted or not, need to realize this. We're

***"I was finally alright with being myself. I was ready to shout, "I'M HERE AND I'M QUEER!" all over the place."***

mophobic joke and say, "I'm queer. That offends me," I'm coming out.

Coming out is like taking a pair of boxing gloves and joining the ring of others who are taking the risks of being proud of who they are. It's joining the fight for LGBTIQ rights.

Coming out is saying, "You will NOT scare me into the closet again. I'm ready to fight for my

worth more than a fucking closet, blatant discrimination and persistent exclusion.

The closet is a dark place and I will be damned if anyone thinks they can scare me into it again.

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