

Why Queer Isn't a Bad Word

by Debra Anderson

When your children are born you have all of these hopes and dreams for them. You want them to be healthy and grew up to be happy successful adults. I think most parents also want them to have it easier than they did. While you know there will be challenges for your children you hope they will be the typical challenges that will help them grow and become stronger. What you don't hope for is them being the target of misconceptions, discrimination, hatred, and even violence because of who they are. When your child is bi-sexual their road to becoming happy, healthy, successful adults is longer and paved with challenges that most people will never experience. My daughter Brittany is bisexual. What that means is she is attracted to both men and women. I have known that she is bi-sexual for few years and she shares the details of her life with me on a regular basis but we have never sat down and talked about her journey to self-acceptance and its challenges from the beginning. I wanted to interview her to help others understand the challenges members of the L.G.B.T. community face, dispel some misconceptions by making it more personal through her story, and help others who may be on this journey.

When you are L.G.B.T. (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender) coming to terms with one's sexuality when you are surrounded by people who basically look and sound alike and whose values and beliefs are based on the Judeo-Christian heritage is a confusing and painful process. We lived in a town in southwestern Minnesota, population 1,300. Cottonwood was a conservative rural community. It was a single parent household that included me (her mom), Brittany, and her younger brother Dalton. While their father wasn't around much they had extended family in the area including grandparents with whom they spent time on a regular basis. According to Brittany, this was a good place to grow up in, "The whole fabric of the community was knit together, whether it was school activities or church activities, or whatever town stuff was going on! Yah, everyone was everywhere." Despite all these great things about growing up in a small town, the truth was, if she had come out while still in school many of these caring supportive people would have shunned her or worse.

Puberty is always a difficult time, but for someone who is also grappling with their sexual identity, there is another layer of confusion. Brittany's first sense that she might be different was in the sixth grade. She had a dream about kissing a girl and it "freaked" her out. Certain situations began to make her feel self-conscious, like the girl's locker room. Her friendships with other girls were often intense. Growing up Brittany had a close group of friends who, "when we were watching movies and stuff always wanted to cuddle and they would all pile together on the couch and I always felt weird about that. I would never join them, um, or at sleepovers, if everybody piled on the bed I would choose

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