

Brittany was still her granddaughter and she loved her. Since then there has been a lot of progress, but the relationship has never been quite the same.

Being bi-sexual creates its own set of dating challenges that, like me, most people probably have never considered. Some members of the L.G.B.T. community don't think bisexuality is real. According to Brittany, they think you are either confused or not ready to admit you are gay/lesbian. Women initially think you are a lesbian and then they start to worry you will leave them for a man. Straight men may initially think it's "hot" but then start to worry you will leave them for a woman. Also, most people assume she is straight even when, as she says, "My hair was really short and I had the most cliché' queer girl haircut." This even happens in gay bars. Some people assume they have a larger pool to pick from but both straight and homosexuals are uncomfortable with having to compete with additional individuals when dating someone who is bi-sexual.

Professionally there have been some unique challenges for her as well. Brittany works for a labor union so her co-workers and other members of the community tend to be progressive and it is politically acceptable in those circles. While she hasn't had to hide her sexual orientation there has been some resentment among the older "queers". They couldn't come out when they were her age for fear of hurting their careers or they did come out and suffered for it. It has also meant more work because as she says, "In a moment when suddenly like it's much more politically acceptable you get tokenized. I get tokenized a lot and I've used it to my advantage, but it's also really frustrating that I'm the token queer person who has to go to this and that, and represent, you know, it ends up being like more work for me because I'm the queer one." It also feels weird to have the people she interacts with on a professional level know her sexuality. Brittany has found ways to use this to her advantage and that has opened doors for her professionally.

I asked my daughter what advice would she give to those struggling with their sexuality or whether to come out. She said, "Be patient with yourself. Love yourself." According to Brittany, there has been so much progress in the last 5 years that it is already a different ball game and not just politically. It is less acceptable to be homophobic and technology, like blogs and Tumbler, has made it easier to connect and find a sense of community, even if it isn't in person. Feeling isolated and alone can be one of the biggest challenges for members of the L.G.B.T. community so having a support system is crucial to finding their way in the world.

I also asked her what advice would she give to family and friends and she again said "be patient" and also "don't make assumptions." Her grandmother is a good example of this. Over time she has begun to ask questions about things she wonders about or doesn't understand. She worried that she would say something wrong or ask a dumb question. Brittany has reassured her that she wants her to ask those questions. It is better to put yourself out there, by showing your vulnerability, it will make it easier for the L.G.B.T. person to open up to you.

My final question for my daughter was "What one thing would you want other people to know about you that would surprise them?" Brittany replied so softly I had to ask her to repeat what she said, "I am full of surprises." She then continued that she finds it funny that I won't call her queer. She understands for me it has negative connotations and that for most of my life terms like queer and fag were used in a derogatory way. Brittany explained that the term "bi-sexual" still feels "icky" but she doesn't feel that way about the word queer. "Queer feels empowering." I realized I could hear the difference in her voice when she said each word. This was a surprise to me and I will have to work on it.

Since Brittany went off to New York City eight years ago I have watched her become this strong and fierce young woman. She puts herself out there all the time. When she was displaced by Hurricane Sandy and taken in by a friend's family she was so grateful for their generosity that she volunteered