

EDITORS' NOTE

As Trevor Brumm's title conveys, "coming out" is the dominant focus of his essay. However, Brumm expands his purpose to a more general theme of "belongingness." He shows how some people feel the need to ignore aspects of themselves in order to "fit in" to a specific crowd, especially in high school. Yet, at the end of the essay, Brumm expresses his comfort with himself since arriving to college. Brumm is clearly writing to an audience of peers. How does the way you view your audience limit or expand the information you reveal about yourself in an essay?

WRITER'S NOTE

What was originally just a writing assignment to reflect back on a life-changing experience ended up being something that helped me grow as a person. After writing this essay, I have become more comfortable and confident with who I am. Putting my experience into words and onto paper has forced me to look back on it from a different perspective. I was able to see how much I've changed as a person over just the last couple of years.

My Coming Out Story

Trevor Brumm

For as long as I can remember, I knew I was different than most kids. I didn't enjoy playing sports like other boys, and I always felt more comfortable around girls. As I got older, I started to become attracted to other males. I tried to deny those feelings, thinking maybe it was just a phase that would pass over time. Those feelings and attractions never disappeared and if anything, they just became stronger. I finally came to terms with my sexuality during my sophomore year of high school. However, I waited until after graduation to tell anyone I was gay. I was afraid that my friends wouldn't want to hang out with me anymore or that my family would disown me. But as it turned out, my relationships with my friends and family members remained exactly the same. Coming out of the closet has been a life changing experience for me. After years of hiding who I really was, I finally feel comfortable in my own skin.

High school is often said to be the best four years of someone's life. Teenagers are beginning the transition to adulthood, but still have many freedoms and few responsibilities. My time spent in high school wasn't as great though. Yes, I made a lot of friends and got to experience many new things, but I still had to deal with and hide the fact that I was different. Towards the end of senior year, people began getting dates for senior prom. My friends kept asking me which girl I was going to bring to the dance. I always made some excuse about why I didn't have a date yet. Since my high school was in such a conservative area, there was no way I could bring another guy to the dance. It would have shocked everyone, and I wasn't ready for people to know that I was gay. I ended up going to the prom with a few other dateless friends. We made our way to the dance floor, and my dateless friends quickly found dance partners. I didn't know what to do. I felt like everyone was staring at me and saw that I was alone. And despite the fact that I was surrounded by my classmates, that was exactly how I felt at that moment, detached and isolated.

Over the following summer, I found enough courage to tell one of my best friends that I was gay. Soon after, most of my close friends found out. They were all so supportive and proud of me for finally accepting who I was. Our friendships became stronger, and I felt more connected to them than ever before. As great as it felt to be out to my friends, I was still hiding a huge secret from my parents. They're both very liberal and have never said anything negative about homosexuals before. Yet I was still nervous to tell them because I had no idea how they'd react once they found out. One night, after my mom had just got home from work, I told her there was something I needed to talk to her about. Opening up to her wasn't difficult; it felt natural. The words began to flow out of my mouth, and there was nothing I could do to stop them. I had finally told my own mother about the part of me I had been keeping secret for so long. She opened her arms and told me that I was still her son, and she would always love me no matter what. All the anxiety and dismay I was feeling had eased. The next day she asked me when I was planning on telling my dad. My parents are divorced, and my dad lives in another state. I decided to fly out to Arizona to visit him and my step-mother for a week towards the end of summer. I waited until my very last day there to come out to my dad. Like my mom, I sat him down and told him. Immediately after, I started crying. It was the hardest thing I had ever had to do. I don't know why, but I was sure he would be disappointed in me, and I was terribly afraid of his reaction. He responded just like my mom had and told me that the fact that I was gay didn't change anything. I couldn't have been more relieved. A huge weight that I had been carrying around for years was finally lifted off my shoulders. I consider myself to be extremely lucky to have such accepting parents who made my coming out process a positive one. I know many people who didn't have such an easy time coming out, and I am grateful that mine was.

Going away to college is something most kids dream about and for me, it was a clean slate. It was a chance to move to a new town and make new friends who I could feel comfortable enough around to be myself. Shortly after coming to Cal Poly, I joined clubs and support groups with other gay students who I quickly became good friends with. One thing I love about college is that it seems like nobody cares that I'm gay. I have made friends here from all different backgrounds and we all get along just fine. It also wasn't until coming to college that I started dating. I was always nervous about going on a date with another guy, but now that I've been on a few, I've realized that it was just typical nervousness that people get when they go on dates.

Coming out of the closet really has changed my life for the better. I'm still the same person I have always been, with the same interest and hobbies, but I'm not lying to myself anymore about something that makes me different than many of my friends and peers. I've developed a sense of confidence that I never had before.

TREVOR BRUMM is a civil engineering major.