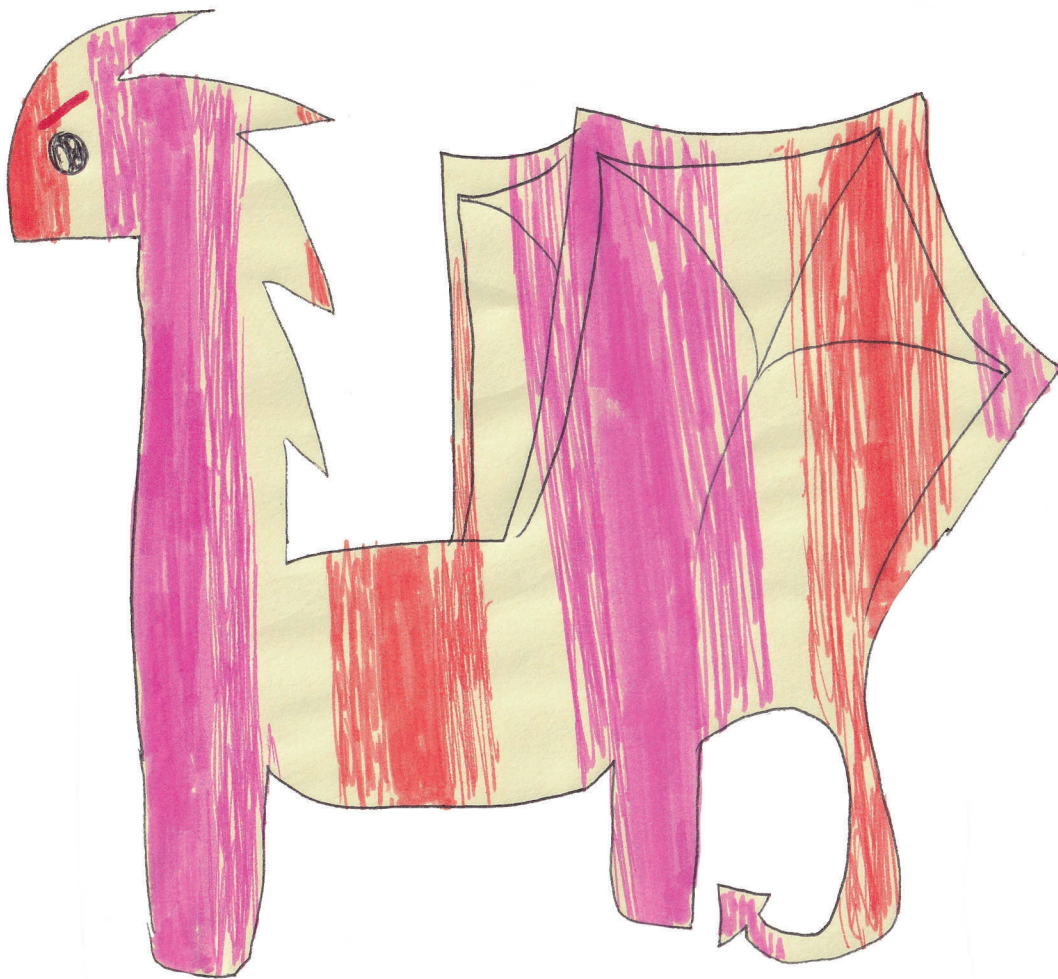


Letters to my Younger Self



**A look at letters across the generations
from the LGBTQ+ community,
as part of Alive's intergenerational STANd project.**

Across generations, the LGBTQ+ community is held together by shared courage, memory, and hope. When younger and older people connect, experience meets possibility - stories of resilience meet fresh vision for the future. These relationships remind us that no one's journey happens in isolation, and that belonging is something we build together.

As part of the STANd project, we worked with old and younger members of the LGBTQ+ community to communicate and connect through letters using both their creativity and curiosity - and they have shared their hopes, fears, experiences and dreams.

These letters are living proof of that connection. They carry advice, laughter, honesty, and care - simple exchanges that grow into friendship and understanding. In sharing their lives with one another, these writers open our eyes, widen our hearts, and show how love and acceptance deepen when we truly listen. This spirit of connection sits at the heart of the work that made this collection possible.



A special thank-you to Off The Record, FAB Café and the LGBT Forum North Somerset and all the people who joined us and wrote letters each week.

Introduction from Isobel Jones, CEO of Alive

Intergenerational connection has always been fundamental to the work of Alive. We believe that when people of different ages come together, something powerful happens - stories are shared, confidence grows, and no one feels quite so alone.

The STANd project has taken this work to a deeper level and being able to work alongside LGBTQ+ young people has been a dream of mine - bringing both ends of the age spectrum together in meaningful, lasting connection.

These stories and letters show just how transformative that can be. They invite us to listen, to learn, and to care more deeply for one another. Wherever we come from, and whoever we are, may they inspire us to connect, to share, and to understand each other better.



I used to wonder why I was different,
I was scared to accept who I was.

I tried to hide away and forget,
I hid behind my smile.

My smile so beautiful, but dull because
I was scared.

I didn't want to be seen as different,
I didn't want to be seen as weird.

I was scared because I heard stories,
Stories that made a fear to accept myself

It took years to accept myself,
especially since I surrounded myself with
the wrong people.

People who used "gay" and "lesbian" as
an insult.

Now my smile is brighter, happier.

I finally feel accepted within myself.

I finally feel like me.

**I used to wonder why I was different,
I was scared to accept who I was.
I tried to hide away and forget,
I hid behind my smile.
My smile so beautiful, but dull because
I was scared.**

**I didn't want to be seen as different,
I didn't want to be seen as weird.**

**I was scared because I heard stories,
Stories that made a fear to accept myself**

**It took years to accept myself,
especially since I surrounded myself with
the wrong people.**

**People who used "gay" and "lesbian" as an
insult.**

**Now my smile is brighter, happier.
I finally feel accepted within myself.
I finally feel like me.**

Hi,



I love music as well especially
60s and 70s I put my emotion
and queerness into writing
and listening to music. like
exploring my feelings there are
so many different genres of
music to find. I'm actually
in a band and we write our
own songs inspired by rock
and blues. I love the playlist
you made it sounds really
nice. in a way music can
be easier to express w self
than saying things out loud
What is your favorite genre
of music?
What is your favorite song?
I will make sure to keep loving
music and the pride it
gives you and me.

HELLO,



THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVELY LETTER.
IT WAS A GREAT JOY TO HEAR THAT YOU
ARE SUCH A LOVER OF MUSIC AND YOU
HAVE YOUR OWN BAND AND WRITE YOUR
OWN SONGS, THAT MUST BE SUCH A
WONDERFUL TALENT TO HAVE.

AND YOUR SO RIGHT MUSIC IS SUCH A
WONDERFUL WAY TO EXPLORE + EXPRESS
YOUR QUEERNESS, IT'S SOMETHING I USED
TO LOVE TO DO WHEN I WAS YOUNGER,
I FOUND IT SO HELPFUL TO FIND OUT WHO
I WAS + FIND COMFORT IN THE SONGS
I LOVED.

I HAVE SO MANY FAVOURITE SONGS, IT'S
ALWAYS HARD TO JUST CHOOSE ONE. I
SEE YOU LIKE MUSIC FROM THE 60'S +
70'S, ONE OF MY FAVOURITE ALBUMS
FROM THAT PERIOD IS AN ALBUM BY
DUSTY SPRINGFIELD 'JUSTY IN MEMPHIS'
IT HAS SO MANY WONDERFUL SONGS ON THAT
ALBUM, I WERE TO ENJOY IT.

Hi,
I love music as well especially
60s and 70s I put my emotion
and queerness into writing
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be easier to express yourself
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What is your favourite genre
of music?
What is your favourite song?
I will make sure to keep loving
music and the pride it
gives you and me.

VISIBILITY 😊



Hello
Thank you for the lovely letter.
It was a great joy to hear that you
are such a lover of music and you
have your own band and write your
own songs, that must be such a
wonderful talent to have.
And you're so right it's such a
wonderful way to explore and express
your queerness. It's something I used
to love to do when I was younger,
I found it so helpful to find out who
I was and find comfort in the songs
I loved.
I have so many favourite songs, it's
Always hard just to choose one. I
see you like music from the 60s
and 70s, one of my favourite albums
from that period is an album by
Dusty Springfield "Dusty In Memphis"
It has so many wonderful songs on that
album, I hope you enjoy it.

THERE ONCE WAS A BOY FROM BRISTOL
WHO FOUND A MYSTERIOUS GREEN
CRYSTAL

HE WENT TO THE BEAR BAR
AND FELT LIKE A STAR
AND HE LIVED A GAY LIFE THAT
WAS BLISSFUL.

THERE ONCE WAS A BOY FROM BRISTOL
WHO FOUND A MYSTERIOUS GREEN
CRYSTAL

HE WENT TO THE BEAR BAR
AND FELT LIKE A STAR
AND HE LIVED A GAY LIFE THAT
WAS BLISSFUL.

I have listened to the artists you have written down, I enjoyed ^{them} and it is good to listen to other people's music suggestions. Company 'Being Alive', this is a song I will go back to.

I like all sort of music Bette Midler The Rose Il Divo A musical affair (CD) and other of theirs Led Zeppelin Simon & Garfunkel. A very ~~et~~ eclectic mix. Carousel musical the song is You'll never walk alone. I am a Liverpool supporter. This song is sung at their matches.

A career in theatre sounds amazing. I wish you well with everything you do and you can do anything you want to.

Thank you for introducing me to new music.

I have listened to the artists you have written down, I enjoyed them and it is good to listen to other people's music suggestions. Company 'Being Alive' this is a song I will go back to.

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Thank you for introducing me to new music.

My music taste isn't very gay, but because I want to pursue a career in theatre I've gotten into musicals, my favourites being Hades Town, Company and Jesus Christ Superstar. I really love "being alive" from Company because while I'm not much of a romantic I feel it speaks to the desire for human connection that we all have. ~~Heaven on their minds~~ I have also been listening to a lot of RnB lately, and I love Erykah Badu and Jill Scott.

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Sipping on drinks, non-alc. but already
drunk on
laughter.

Her eyes sparkling like jewels
in the intimate candlelight.

His long

blonde

hair, ~~washed~~ tousled to perfection

Your own smile, lighting the
room like a
bonfire.

Looking from side to side, realisation
dawning.

Not all love is romantic.

Love is for everyone. As you get drunk on
laughter.

Sipping on drinks, non-alc. but already
drunk on
laughter.

Her
eyes sparkling like jewels
in the intimate candlelight.

His long
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I came out as non-binary two years ago and it has been an equally joyful and at the same time challenging journey. Complex for sure!

Part of me is hesitant to discuss this stuff, especially with an older group of people. Admittedly, part of it is prejudice and fear. I worry that the term 'non-binary' may confuse folks who primarily grew up around the time where this phrase wasn't commonly used.

However, I know I must put this aside! (in many ways.) The main thing is the emphasis on shared experience between us!

I'm curious - what does the term 'non-binary' mean to you? How do you identify? What were similar terms that were around when you were a younger LGBT person, growing up etc.?

I want to honour and value all who may be reading this. I honour you for all who you are and what you have fought for! 🙏

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Is there anything the Younger generation can do to ~~the~~ help older LGBTQIA+^{people} feel more included and comfortable within the community?



Is there anything the younger generation can do to help older LGBTQIA people feel more included and comfortable within the community?

▷ TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE YOU - JUST FURTHER DOWN THE LINE. DON'T SEE US AS 'OTHER'

▷ SMILE AT US WHEN YOU SEE US IN THE STREETS






To remember that we are you - just further down the line. Don't see us as 'other.'
Smile at us when you see us in the streets.



DEAR LEIF

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WONDERFUL LETTER + SHARING SO MUCH ABOUT YOUR WIFE. I LOVE THAT YOU HAVE SUCH A GREAT ENDTIMEOUT MUSIC + LIKE TO ENJOY LISTENING TO SO MANY DIFFERENT GENRES + ARTISTS.

YOU ALSO ASKED ABOUT HOW WE FOUND OUR IDENTITIES + MY BEST ADVICE IS TO TAKE YOUR TIME, AND ENJOY ALL THE THINGS ABOUT YOURSELF YOU'VE DISCOVERED. THERE'S NO PUSH TO CHOOSE + DEFINE YOUR IDENTITY NOW, JUST BE THE PERSON YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE BEING 

THANK YOU!!  

I don't know if I mentioned it in my last letter, but ever since then I've attached to the label genderqueer. I really want to be more weird and funny in my expression, and I'm experimenting with neopronouns at the moment - which I don't have a concrete definition for right now but the ones I'm

looking at are ze/zim/zirs or maybe
it/its/itself. Changing how I present is a
bit harder cos of the dysphoria but I'm
gonna try stuff despite myself (and my
unfortunately large tits)

I'm also hoping to be more present in
local activism. I gotta put all this anger
to good use. ~~What kind of~~ What kind
of activism did you all get into?

Finally, thanks for complimenting my
music tastes 😊

-Leif ♡

Dear Leif,

Thank you for your wonderful letter and sharing so much of your life. I love that you have such great enjoyment of music and like to enjoy listening to so many different genres and artists.

You also asked about how we found our identities and my best advice is to take your time and enjoy all the things about yourself you've discovered. There's no push to choose and define your identity now, just be the person you feel most comfortable being.

Thank you!! J

I don't know if I mentioned it in my last letter, but ever since then I've attached to the label genderqueer. I really want to be more weird and funny in my expression and I'm experimenting with neopronouns at the moment - which I don't have a concrete definition for right now but the ones I'm looking at are ze/zims/zirs or maybe it/its/itself, Changing how I present is a bit harder cos of the dysphoria but I'm gonna try stuff despite myself (and my unfortunately large tits).

I'm also hoping to be more present in local activism. I gotta put all this anger to good use. What kind of activism did you all get into? Finally, thanks for complimenting my music tastes.

Leif

Wow your musical tastes are Eclectically wonderful
from my own experience I am 70 -
I can only say that it took me 28 yrs to realize that I
am a Lesbian - after falling into the
heteronormative Trap - - - - I climbed out
and began my Authentic life .

please take your time to get to know yourself
you're allowed to be kind in your identity .
enjoy being you !

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experience, I am 70, I can only say that it took me 28 years to realise
that I am a lesbian - after falling into the Heteronormative Trap...
I climbed out and began my authentic life.
Please take your time to get to know yourself you're allowed to be
kind in your identity. Enjoy being you!



How does it feel being who you are, in your chosen identity - being with your family - Do you feel accepted? Do you feel able to be open about who you are.

When I came out to my parents (quite late in my life!). My mother's reaction surprised me.

She said my brother had told ~~me~~ her years ago that I was a lesbian. Before I

realised I was myself
really!

I remember when I
was quite young he told
me that Dusty Springfield
was a lesbian and I was
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I remember when I was quite young he told me that Dusty Springfield was a lesbian and I was very surprised!

Hey M,



Yes, things have definitely improved for being queer. Things are, and will always be, difficult, but we're existing, like we always have been.

About a year ago, I went on stage with a queer beat-boxer Shlomo, and I wrote a poem to read onstage with them, and I'd like to share it with you.

Do you see me?

Hidden in the corners of society, stage lights ~~down~~ dimmed
by Oppression?

Do you see me now?

Called "mainstream" by society, spiralling into Depression?

Or can you not?

Words and slurs used as bullets in a battle of Rights,
Only the shielded do not know of all of our plights

I am you. You are me.

You can see me. Stop ignoring me.

All the best, and thanks for the letter.

-V,



Hey M,

Yes things have definitely improved for being queer. Things are, and will always be, difficult but we're existing, like we always have been.

About a year ago, I went on stage with a queer beat-boxer Shlomo, and I wrote a poem to read onstage with them, and I'd like to share it with you.

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All the best, and thanks for the letter.

V





I think it's a lot easier being a queer person now compared to the 70s/80s. Even compared to when I first came out in 2018 - my mum works in a primary school & from what I've heard they are a lot more open about queerness & the possibility that the kids could be queer. When I was that age we weren't told about it at all & had to find out everything from the internet... (maybe not the best idea but I'm grateful it opened the 'fountain of knowledge' so to speak) It must have been even harder when you were young - how did you find out that being

queer was an option/realise you were? How did it feel to find out there were other people who feel the same way as you? I did not meet many other trans people for a long time & I think I am happier now that I have. I'm happy that even though there is still a long way to go, things have gotten better for us & I'm grateful to your generation + the ones before for your part in that & paving the way for myself and other young people!

-Z xoxo

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Z xoxo

We often don't talk about how lucky we are - thank you for walking so we'd be safe enough to run *

We often don't talk about how lucky we are - thank you for walking so we'd be safe enough to run.



Thank you for your strength & bravery ♡

Thank you for your strength and bravery.

Just by existing you prove people like us can live & thrive
- An 18y.o
Queer dude

Just by existing you prove people like us can live and thrive.
- An 18 year old queer dude.


You will get through this!
I believe in you ♡

You'll get through this!
I believe in you!

In coming out do you feel
the difficulty in finding
other people who are in
the LGBTQ society that you
can relate to, do you feel stuck
alone.

What struggles do you think
older people faced?

(A) I definitely do - I think the more lonely one is, the
harder it is to get out of loneliness & get out the
house. The opposite is also true though - though I am
socially anxious, if I force myself to leave the house &
show up to events, then it gets easier. Going to the
LGBTQ+ older group, going to the ~~occasional~~ occasional
protest, going to a tea & biscuits group - even if it's hard
to open up & feel connected, getting to see familiar faces,
& giving myself opportunities to overhear that other
events are also planning & inviting myself - it's like a
snowball gathering more snow as it rolls down a hill

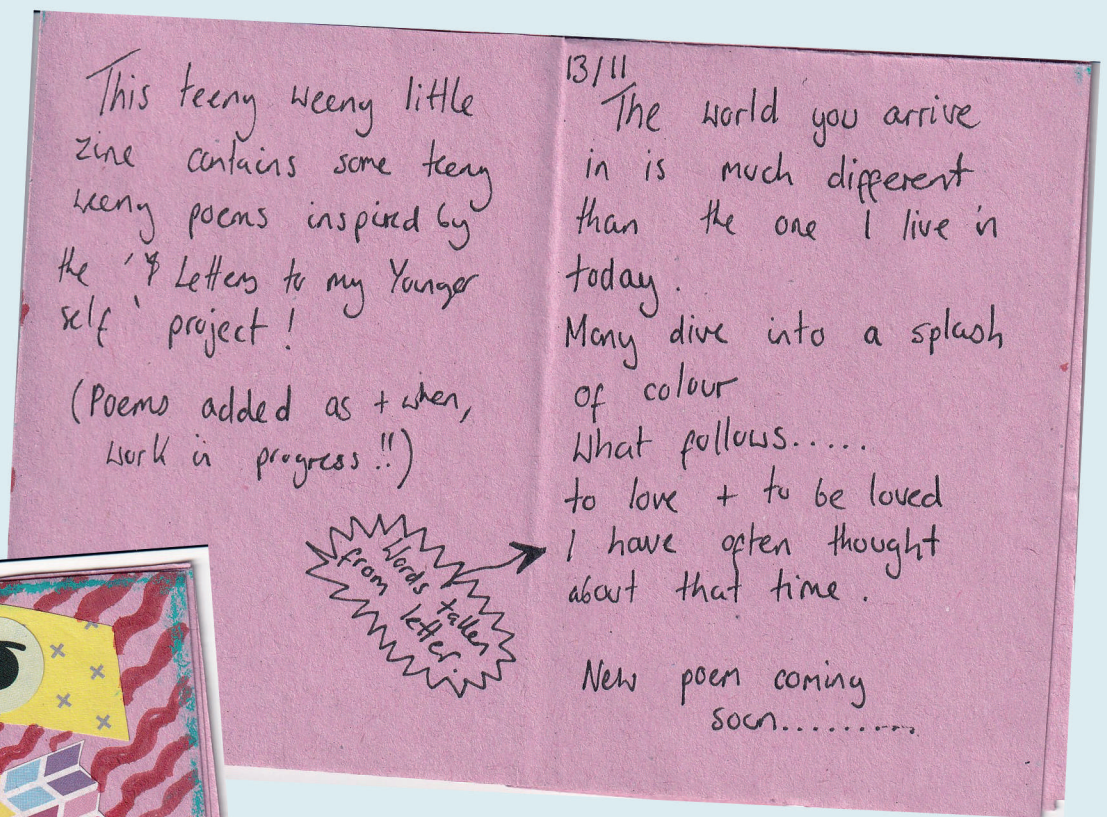


In coming out do you feel the difficulty in finding other people who are in the LGBT society that you can relate to, do you feel still alone.

What struggles do you think older people faced?

I definitely do - I think the more lonely one is, the harder it is to get out of loneliness and get out of the house. The opposite is also true though - though I am socially anxious, if I force myself to leave the house and show up to events, then it gets easier, Going to the LGBTQ+ older group, going to the occasional protest, going to a tea and biscuits group - even if it's hard to open up and feel connected, getting to see familiar faces and giving myself opportunities to overhear that other events are also planning and inviting myself - it's like a snowball gathering more snow as it rolls down a hill.

This teeny weeny little zine contains some teeny weeny poems inspired by the 'Letters to My Younger Self' project!



The world you arrive in is much different than the one I live in today. Many dive into a splash of colour What follows... to love and be loved I have often thought about that time.

New poem coming soon...

Transcript from letter opposite:

Music

Music has always been a lifeline for me.

When I was young it was my escape from trying to work out relationships, schoolwork and family - it was confusing and I sometimes couldn't express feelings, but music took me somewhere else, and was exciting, soothing, sometimes such a release, smiling, sometimes crying, I was luckily Mum knew how much music meant and we would take and swap music favourites. She was Jamaican and introduced me to Reggae.

Music

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She was jamaican and introduced me to Reggae - ♡

Is there anything that older
LGBT+ people could do
to support younger LGBT+
people in their identity?

Reply:

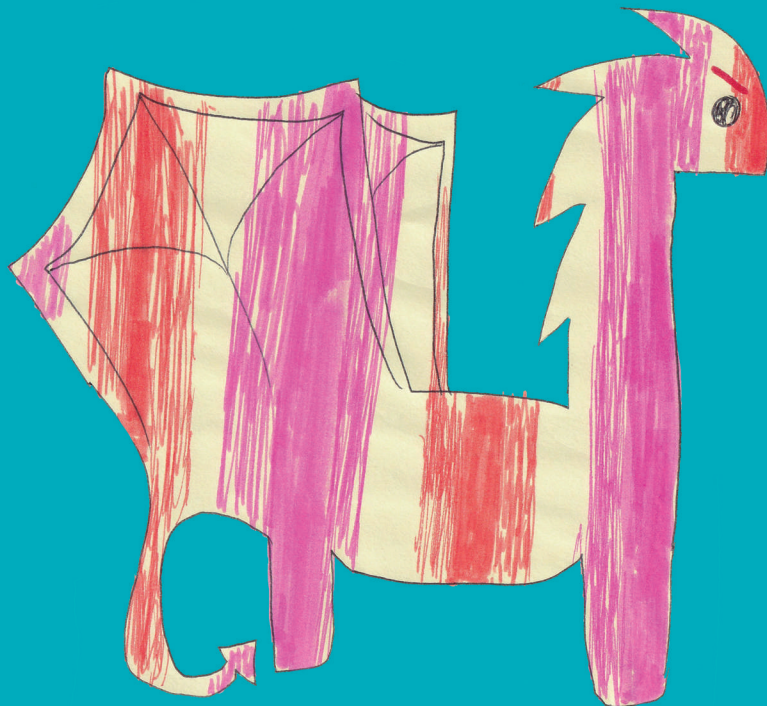
- queer visibility among older people - especially diverse older queer people
- more open conversation between older and younger queer people - and places to have these in
- sharing their stories and histories
- being continually open about the ever-increasing diversity of different ~~queer~~ identities.

LGBT

Is there anything that older LGBT+ people could do to support younger LGBT+ people in their identity?

Reply:

- queer visibility among older people - especially diverse older queer people.
- more open conversation between older and younger queer people - and places to have these in
- sharing their stories and histories
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Hopes + Queer Joy



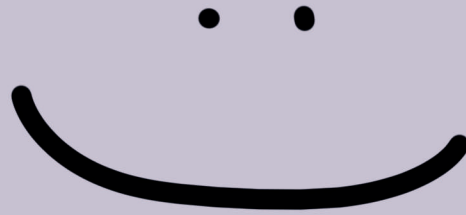
At my job, I know a lot more older rather than younger queer people! I love the knowledge that they can offer me.

I love seeing older queer people, it gives me hope that there is a future for me!

Queer Joy

- ⌘ I feel queer joy whenever I weirdly see Magpies? I think the stigma about seeing them as unlucky makes me want to see them positively
- * Talking gay slang openly makes me feel really good + seeing people do it in movies/tv shows!
- ⌘ Being in spaces where I can be my authentic self

Lesbian sadness is falling in love with your bisexual friend who is in a relationship with a man ☹



Hopes + Queer Joy

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Being in spaces where I can be my authentic self.

Lesbian sadness is falling in love with your bisexual friend who is in a relationship with a man.



I have recently stopped drinking, smoking +
have been completely sober for 6 months!
I am still trying to find my tribe/chosen
family. I am finding it difficult because I
do not ~~en~~ like going to clubs + bars anymore
Do you have any recommendations on how
to find your tribe if you don't want to
drink ??? x x x

HELLO!

I ALWAYS FOUND A GOOD WAY TO
FIND YOUR TRIBE IS TO LOOK FOR
SOME GOOD LGBT + SOCIAL GROUPS
YOU MIGHT ENJOY. I KNOW BRISTOL
HAS SOME NICE GROUPS LIKE
QUEER HIKING, QUEER BOOK GROUP
BS3 SOCIAL GROUP.

DO YOU ENJOY SPORTS, IF SO THERE
ARE ALSO SOME REALLY WELCOME
SPORTS GROUPS BT: OUT TO SWIM,
BRISTOL SWIFTS BADMINTON, QUEER
CLIMBING, ROLLER DERBY.

I HOPE YOU FIND THESE
HELPFUL + A SPACE YOU CAN
ENTER.

I'D ALSO SAY I'VE SOMETIMES
FOUND MY TRIBE THROUGH WORK
OR FRIENDS OF FRIENDS, SOMETIMES
YOUR TRIBE COMES YOUR WAY BY
SURPRISE, GOOD PEOPLE WILL ALSO
FIND YOU, ALWAYS BE OPEN TO
MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS +
FRIENDSHIPS IN ALL AREAS OF
YOUR LIFE + GRADUALLY YOUR
TRIBE WILL GROW! ♥

- find queer ppl who are doing your hobbies
- queer bookshop events
- OUT stories
- Charities
- lesbian bookgroups - make up your own
- lesbian walking groups
- LGBT+ meditation groups
- Watershed events
- Queer cinema groups

I have recently stopped drinking, smoking and have been completely sober for 6 months! I am still trying to find my tribe/chosen family. I am finding it difficult because I do not like going to clubs and bars anymore. Do you have nay recommendations on ho to find your tribe if you don't want to drink??? Xxx

Hello!

I always found a good way to find your tribe is to look for some good LGBT+ social groups you might enjoy. I know Bristol has some nice groups like queer hiking, queer book group, BS3 social group.

Do you enjoy sports, if so there are some really welcoming sports groups e.g. Out To Swim, Bristol Swifts Badminton, Queer Climbing, Rollerderby.

I hope you find these helpful and a space you can enjoy. I'd also say I have sometimes found my tribe through work or friends of friends, sometimes your tribe comes your way by surprise. Good people will also find you, always be open to making new connections and friendships in all areas of your life and gradually your tribe will grow!

- find queer people who are doing your hobbies
- queer bookshop events
- OUT stories
- charities
- lesbian book groups, make up your own
- lesbian writing groups
- LGBT+ meditation groups
- Watershed events
- Queer cinema groups

DON'T BE
AFRAID TO BE
YOURSELF,
YOU WILL ALWAYS
BE LOVED FOR
BEING YOU!

Don't be afraid to be yourself. You will always be loved for being you!

Find your tribe
but branch out.

We will have
difficult times
but will get
through together.

Find your tribe but branch out.
We will have difficult times but
will get through together.

♥ TAKE WHAT YOU NEED ♥

AS A LESBIAN
FEMINIST WOMAN
I WANT TO
KNOW I FULLY
SUPPORT THE
TRANS COMMUNITY
YOU ARE SO
WONDERFUL!

As a lesbian feminist woman I want you to know I fully support the trans community you are so wonderful!

What struggles do you think older people faced.

Mainly the people but also themselves especially if they're alone,

Coming out to your family and friends.

HRT Treatment and surgery

As for someone who had experienced gender/body dysmorphia, and change a few times with my gender and sexuality, I can see why people struggle with these things.



What struggles do you think older people faced.

Mainly the people but also themselves especially if they're alone.

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HRT treatment and surgery.

As for someone who had experienced gender body dysmorphia and change a few times with my gender and sexuality, I can see why people struggle with these things.



P

Perfect
positive
Proof
Precious

R

Ready
respect
real

I

I am
inspirational
Inclusive
invigorating
integrity

D

delightful
daring
diversity

E

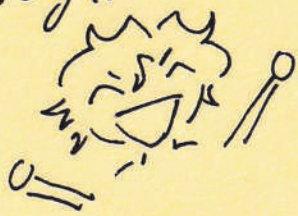
enthusiastic
encouragement
equality
Enjoyment



Be kind
to
yourself!
♥

You ARE
worth it ♥
😊

Y'all Rock!!
It's never too late
to begin understanding
yourself!!



The world today is very online
so much less difficult to find
similar people.

However, I find LGBT+ people
tend to naturally gravitate
to each other even when the
identification is not shared
or even consciously known.

It is probably much more
common to share information
now however.

The world today is very online so much less difficult to find similar people.

However I find LGBT= people tend to naturally gravitate to each other even when the identification is not shared or even consciously known. It is probably much more common to share information now however.

The world's pretty scary but...

**HOPE ISN'T
LOST UNTIL
YOU GIVE
UP!!**

we're going to be
okay :]

The world's pretty scary but...

Hope isn't lost until you give up!

We're going to be okay!

A limerick from a FAB café group member:

There was a young lesbian from Knowle,
She had a particular goal.
She followed the vibe,
and found her tribe
And now lives her best rainbow life...
With her wife.



Don't change
yourself for
anyone!



HUGS

Different people
drew the hugs.

Don't change yourself for anyone!

How does it feel being my chosen identity?

I struggled a long time with my mental health + finally realising I was a lesbian made me feel free! Like a huge weight being lifted off my chest.

How does my family make me feel?

My sisters (I have 3 of them!) are all really accepting. My mum still thinks that 'this is a phase' and makes me feel upset that she doesn't accept me.

I only came out to my family last year at the age of 24! When I was really drunk. I felt relieved that I did it that way. My family did not guess my sexuality.

But I am extremely thankful for my sisters + queer friends who make me feel valid.

Feel

accepted + comfortable

to share who I am in my workplace + my friends

A thick, hand-drawn pink line starts at the top center and curves down and to the left, ending near the first question.

How does it feel being my chosen identity?

I struggled a long time with my mental health and finally realising I was a lesbian made me feel free! Like a huge weight being lifted off my chest.

A thick, hand-drawn pink line starts on the left side and curves down and to the right, ending near the second question.

How does my family make me feel?

My sisters (I have three of them!) are all really accepting. My Mum still thinks that 'this is a phase' and makes me feel upset that she doesn't accept me.

I only came out to my family last year at the age of 24! When I was really drunk. I felt relieved that I did it that way. My family did not guess my sexuality. But I am extremely thankful for my sisters and queer friends who make me feel valid.

A thick, hand-drawn pink line starts on the right side and curves down and to the left, ending near the third question.

I feel accepted and comfortable to share who I am in my workplace and my friends.

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It feels great to know as a queer person that I can pursue acting. I look up to Neve Galt, who played ~~Doctor~~ the Doctor (in Doctor Who) as a gay man for the first time. As a transgender man, I loved seeing Misia Butler playing a transgender character who wasn't ridiculed and was a real love interest to a cisgender woman in the Netflix series *Kaos*. It makes me hope that I won't be typecast for my identity. Alongside newer shows, I've been on an Alfred Hitchcock marathon and "Strangers on a Train" really struck me ~~as~~ as a metaphor for the main character's repressed homosexuality, and ~~his~~ I later read that some sections of their first

Meeting on the train was cut in the US for being too 'explicit'. I haven't watched 'Rope', but I heard that it was even more explicit in its depiction of homosexuality. I like finding movies that tried to get queerness past the Hays code, because it proves that we've always been around, even in times of censorship and peopoganda. I went to see a play about Alfred Hitchcock on the east coast, and seeing the Killers from Rope portrayed ~~explicitly~~ clearly as Gay lovers made me happy about how far we've come in terms of visibility.

It feels great as a queer person to know as a queer person that I can pursue acting. I look up to Ncuti Gutta, who played the Doctor (in Doctor Who) as a gay man for the first time. As a transgender man, I loved seeing Misha Butler playing a transgender character who wasn't ridiculed and was a real love interest to a cisgender woman in the Netflix Series Chaos. It make me hope that I won't be typecast for my identity. Alongside newer shows, I've been on an Alfred Hitchcock marathon and "Strangers on a Train" really struck me as a metaphor for the main character's repressed homosexuality and I later read that some sections of their first meeting on the train was cut in the US for being too 'explicit', I haven't watched 'Rope' but I heard that it was even more explicit in its depiction of homosexuality. I like finding movies that tried to get queerness past the Hays code, because it proves that we've always been around, even in times of censorship and propaganda. I went to see a play about Alfred Hitchcock on the Easter and seeing the Killers from Rope portrayed clearly as gay lovers made me happy about how far we've come in terms of visibility.

Hello. It was so lovely to read your letter as so much of it resonated with me. There was a lot of music in our house when I was young. My Mum and Dad had met at a dance during the Second World War. They loved all kinds of music so the radio and records were very important. Also I had two older sisters and an older brother who were big fans of the Beatles and Rolling Stones.

I was born in 1960 and by the time I was 12 years old I knew I was 'different'. I became aware of certain artists (such as David Bowie) and songs like 'Walk on the wild side' by Lou Reed which were especially important to the 'LGBT+ community' although that term hadn't yet been coined.

You mention George Michael in your letter. I didn't appreciate him at the time but love dancing in clubs to his song 'Flawless (go to the city)'. It is based on the tune 'Flawless' by The Ones which I also heard in clubs.

Anyway I used to put on some uplifting songs whilst putting on my make-up and getting ready to go out.

Please be kind to yourself then you can help others along the way. Things are especially difficult since the Supreme Court ruling and I have been adversely affected by it. Please remember that us old folks went through the Aids crisis and Section 28 so this particular dark time will pass eventually. I try to put things in perspective.

I like reading the social history of the LGBT plus community. It really helps me to understand the people and campaigns that came before us.

So sending solidarity to you and the younger generation.

Bless.

L - Learning who you are, how you view the world and feel towards other people.

G - Gaining new feelings towards yourself and other people.

B - being open and yourself, whilst inspiring other people.

T - teaching younger generations how to feel comfortable in their own skin.

Q - questioning how you feel and whether or not it's right and allowed.

I - Images changing and gay members expressing themselves in new ways.

A - allowing yourself to be free and live your life comfortably.

LGBTQ+ Older Group

Hi All,

First of all thank you for sharing your letters with us.

We know that the lives we lead and the decisions we make every day are difficult at times but we don't have a choice. We have to live our lives, no matter the obstacles that society puts in our way, the misunderstandings, the put downs etc but well you know all about this anyway...

I had hoped with the passing of time that things would have been easier for you, in some ways they are but there is still prejudice at every turn. In my day homosexuality was illegal, lesbian mothers had their children taken away and trans people were very much in the closet, so there has been some progress !

All I can say is believe in yourself, the road isn't easy but remember you are all great human beings, trying to make the best of what gets thrown at you and you will survive, and thrive, I'm proud of you all.

Support each other and remember to have some fun on the way, lots of laughter amongst the tears and support each other. Don't forget our history, we have always existed, no matter what they say... Out Stories in Bristol celebrates our history, the pioneers, the ordinary folk, me and you.

Once I had the confidence in myself through the support of others I found out/knew that wherever in the world I went there were groups, others like me and that they are my "chosen family".

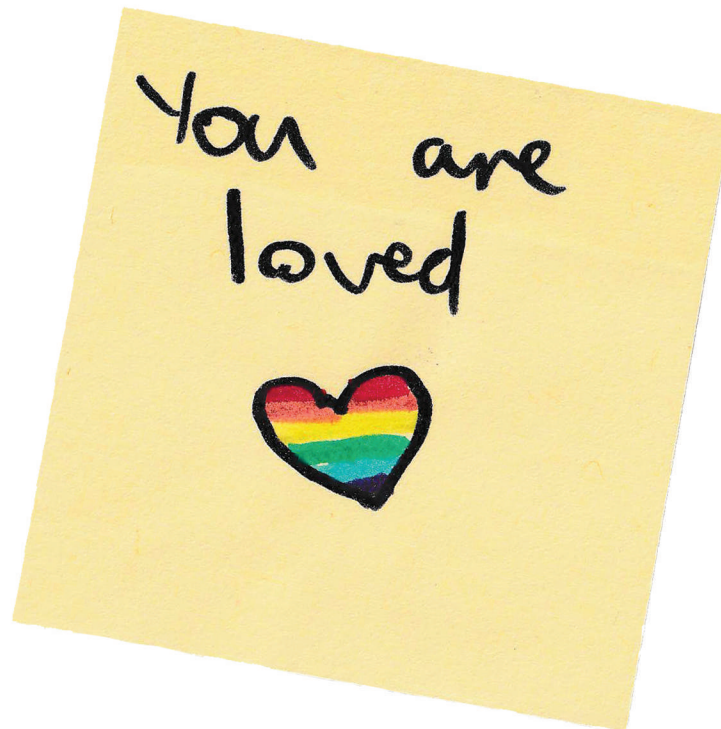
I'll end this letter with two quotes:

"Look after yourself, allow humour to lighten the burden of your tender heart" Maya Angelou (Poet, writer)

" We are all of us stars, and we deserve to twinkle" Marilyn Monroe (Actress)

All the best,

M



Thank you to all our wonderful partners:



**NORTH SOMERSET
LGBT+ FORUM**



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