

In that year I received a selection of responses to people finding out my mum is gay.



When I was first asked to give a speech about what it is like having a lesbian mother, and what kind of experiences I've had, my first thought was to tell you about the reactions I got when I first started telling people.

My mum realised her sexuality when I was in year six. I was shy and excruciatingly unpopular. I was the kid that people didn't even need to say anything, for me to be a joke. So I wasn't going to give them any reason to ostracize me more. I didn't tell anyone. Some people knew, but I was content to pretend that they didn't, and so were they.

Then I got to high school, and it turned out there were a whole bunch of "losers" like me, that, just like me, didn't care for trying to be popular. I had loads of friends, and loads of confidence. I started telling people and by the end of year 8 I was almost shocked when someone didn't already know about my mum.

In that year I received a selection of responses to people finding out my mum is gay. When people wanted to support me, and let me know they were OK with it, they'd usually tell me about some relative they had that's gay too. Probably one of my favourite reactions is when people, and this was often people I expected a little more thought and intelligence out of, would say to me "No she isn't" and they would say it with such conviction. "Excuse me, but she is" "How would she have had you then??" and the shock and horror as it all comes out! Actually, lesbians aren't infertile, gasp. It was usually then that I would explain to them that my mother and father had been quite happily married for some 15 or so years before my mother realised she's gay. Some people would just tell me it's unnatural or disgusting, and it wasn't long at all before there was no point trying to argue with me, because I became far too educated and experienced in arguing the matter.

At the time, and still now, there have been no "outed" gay people in my school year group. So I became the authority. Year 10 health spent the entire year looking at sex and sexuality, it got so monotonous by the end, as one of the less educated people, generally a boy, would make a homophobic comment, and the entire class would turn, as if intentionally comedic to face me and wait for the rebuttal. It got to the point where I had made my argument so many times so clearly that I didn't feel the need to continue it.

And it turned out that I didn't need to. By this stage, my gaggle of well spoken and intelligent friends had heard the argument for the umpteenth time, and could have recited it in their sleep. They were well equipped with arguments and rebuttals. I can only assume that these people, since they so quickly and easily took up positions to defend homosexuality, would have been inclined to do so anyway, but since then, many in depth conversations with such friends, has shown that many of them had never heard such pro-gay arguments before I came out with them, and many of them, particularly the boys felt that, though they wouldn't have identified as homophobic, that I had ensured that any less-than-tolerant views they had harbored had been long since banished. I would hear my friends argue thoughtfully, and cleverly against the much less thoughtful and clever stereotypes that form the homophobic argument, but because of the abundance of gay literature, usually magazines, newspapers and newsletters I was allowed to remain the ostensible authority on the anti-homophobic front.

I'm always pleased to think of how I have been able to influence my friends, to become more tolerant people, even if they didn't need much of an influence. And I do feel that it is my predicament that lead me to become my year groups leader of the anti-homophobic argument, but I don't really feel that my mother's sexuality has had that great an effect on me. I know I'd have not had the opportunity to be the go-to guy when a pro-gay rebuttal is required, but I am confident my opinions would not change had it been that my mother and father had stayed together. Having said that I recognise that the strength of my argument is borne in the various gay texts that I've had the opportunity to read, only because my mother is gay.

I do think that in part my strength of character has been lead to develop by the passive homophobia I have had to deal with. I've had those who assume I am gay for two main reasons, the first illogical reason being that my mother is, and the second, more logical idea being based on the fact I am constantly arguing against homophobia.

The main result of this is my strong convictions about equality and tolerance. An assumption that I occasionally make wrongly is that those who have suffered the injustice of intolerance, would sympathize for other intolerances. By this I mean that I expect, for instance, that people who have been the victim of homophobia to not be racist.

My assumption is not always the way things are, as was shown to me when I was at the fair day at the beginning of Pride month, with my mother who had brought my sister and I up to Perth for the event. My sister and I were strolling along, looking at the merchandise of the stalls, stopping at each one to have a more in depth look. At quite a few of the stalls we were told of the various merchandise, under the presumption that at a gay event, the two young girls were probably gay, and fair enough to make that assumption, we would then, politely tell the people that though there stock was lovely, we were only here to support our lesbian mum, and that we are in fact straight. To this we received much gushing and smiles, because aren't we lovely to be supporting our mum, how nice of us, such nice young girls, and so on and so forth. At one stall we strolled upon, we were browsing along when the sales person snapped at us "This is only for gay people". I was quite taken aback. We had been told we weren't welcome to purchase his commodities because he had assumed we weren't gay. What if that had happened to a gay person? It would have been quite rude to wrongly assume the persons sexuality, and what if the situation had been reversed totally, political correctness battles against that sort of thing, so why then did this man think it was justifiable to tell us we could not buy from him because we aren't homosexual. What if we had wished to buy something for our mother?

As someone who is always arguing gay rights, and was indeed there to support gay Pride, I didn't feel I deserved to be snapped at for not being gay. After all, one of the main points to argue for homosexuality is that it is not a controllable thing, and we had no more chosen to be straight than that man had chosen not to be.

As far as it goes, that's probably the closest thing I've had to a worst experience, that's resulted from my mum being a lesbian. I listen to all the talk about how same-sex couples aren't suitable for rearing children, and think that maybe, just possibly, they could ask someone. I would hazard a guess, that like me, any children of homosexual headed house holds would tell you, that the love and support of a parent has nothing to do with they're sexuality, and my development into a young adult has certainly not been hindered because my mum prefers women, if anything, I have been given great opportunities, like this, to develop my character in a way that wouldn't be offered to the children of a "happy nuclear family".

I would hazard a guess, that like me, any children of homosexual headed house holds would tell you, that the love and support of a parent has nothing to do with they're sexuality

