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**NORFOLK LGBT+ PROJECT IS UNABLE TO ACCEPT
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CONTAINED HEREIN.**

**ANY VIEWS CONTAINED IN THIS BOOKLET ARE
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VOLUNTEERS OF NORFOLK LGBT+ PROJECT.**

THIS BOOKLET HAS BEEN FUNDED BY

**NORFOLK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION,
PRODUCED BY NORFOLK LGBT+ PROJECT.**

JULY 2016.

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INTRODUCTION

SOME OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS MAY CALL IT A MID-LIFE CRISIS OR JUST FINALLY BEING TRUE TO YOURSELF. EITHER WAY, COMING OUT IS A RIGHT OF PASSAGE FOR EVERY LGBT+ PERSON.

COMING OUT IN LATER LIFE CAN BE COMPLEX, STRESSFUL OR EVEN FRIGHTENING FOR SOME PEOPLE BUT, MOST OF US WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE PROCESS CAN RECALL THE FEELINGS OF HOPE AND FEAR THAT MINGLE TOGETHER WITH PURE NEED.

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE REVEALING SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT COULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN LOSING THE LOVE AND RESPECT OF THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU...LIKE YOUR PARENTS, SIBLINGS, AND FRIENDS.

THERE ARE MANY STORIES FROM THOSE WHO HAVE COME OUT ONLY TO WALK AWAY FROM THE EXPERIENCE WITH A HANDFUL OF ACCEPTING FRIENDS AND AN ICY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR FAMILY, OR THOSE WHOSE FAMILY HAVE LOVED THEM UNCONDITIONALLY FROM THE START.

EVERYONE WILL HANDLE THIS DIFFERENTLY AND SURELY SOME SPOUSES ALREADY HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THEIR HUSBAND'S OR WIVES SEXUALITY OR GENDER IDENTITY LONG BEFORE THEY CAN ADMIT IT...BUT THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MAKE FACING THE TRUTH ANY EASIER.

SOMETIMES... EVEN THOUGH A MARRIAGE DISSOLVES, IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE LOVE YOU SHARED GOES AWAY. SOME EX'S REMAIN LIFELONG FRIENDS....BUT NOT WITHOUT A LOT OF WORK AND MUCH TRUTH TELLING...BUT AT LEAST THERE IS HOPE FOR HEALING, AND THAT BOTH SPOUSES CAN GO ON TO FIND A FORM OF HAPPINESS.

COMING OUT USUALLY COSTS US ALL SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE FOR THE GAINS WE MAKE IN LIVING HONESTLY....BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE CANNOT FIND THE STRENGTH TO MEET THIS RIGHT OF PASSAGE UNTIL WE ARE IN OUR 40S, 50S OR EVEN LATER?

WE HOPE YOU FIND COMFORT IN THIS BOOKLET, WHETHER IT IS ADVICE OR SUPPORT.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

WHAT DOES "COMING OUT" MEAN?

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET, OR SIMPLY COMING OUT, IS A FIGURE OF SPEECH FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) PEOPLE'S SELF-DISCLOSURE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY.

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET IS THE SOURCE OF OTHER GAY SLANG EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE. LGBT+ PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY REVEALED OR NO LONGER CONCEAL THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY ARE OUT, I.E. OPENLY LGBT+. OPPOSITELY, LGBT+ PEOPLE WHO HAVE YET TO COME OUT OR HAVE OPTED NOT TO DO SO ARE LABELLED AS CLOSETED OR BEING IN THE CLOSET.

REMEMBER - WHETHER OR NOT TO COME OUT IS YOUR CHOICE, EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY.

**FEELINGS &
THOUGHTS**

LONELY

SCARED

ASHAMED

**DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST**

PRESSURED

HOSTILITY

BULLYING

CONFUSED

REJECTION

JUDGED

STIGMA

DEPRESSED

LABELLED

IT IS NATURAL TO FEEL ANY OF THE ABOVE, COMING TO TERMS WITH YOUR SEXUALITY OR GENDER IDENTITY CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS, BUT OVER TIME IT DOES AND WILL GET BETTER.

COMING OUT IS AGELESS

Q. HOW CAN ANYONE BE IN THEIR 40S, 50S, 60S AND BEYOND AND NOT KNOW THAT THEY ARE GAY?

A. WE OFTEN ASSUME THAT THERE MUST BE A "RIGHT" AGE FOR COMING OUT, OUR AGING BABY BOOMERS GREW UP IN A TIME WHEN BEING LGBT+ WAS A CRIME, A PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER AND FOR MANY PEOPLE IT WAS CONSIDERED MORALLY WRONG. POWER, FEAR, SHAME WERE SOME OF MANY REASONS WHY PEOPLE STAYED IN THE CLOSET.

Q. DOES IT REALLY MATTER IF YOU DON'T COME OUT?

A. THIS IS VERY MUCH A PERSONAL CHOICE BUT FOR SOME INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN THE CLOSET CAN BE STRESSFUL AND EMOTIONALLY TAXING - WITH THE FEAR OF BEING OUTED TO FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS. FOR SOME, LIFE EVENTS SUCH AS CHILDREN LEAVING HOME, DIVORCE OR A SUDDEN "LIGHT BULB" MOMENT MAY OCCUR WHEN THEY MEET SOMEONE OF THE SAME SEX AND A CONNECTION IS MADE. AGAIN, IT IS ALL A PERSONAL CHOICE BUT BEING TRUE TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS AROUND YOU CAN ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR INNER HAPPINESS.

THINKING ABOUT COMING OUT?

EDUCATE YOURSELF

PEOPLE COME OUT AT DIFFERENT AGES FOR MANY DIFFERENT REASONS. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

FIND SUPPORT

COME OUT TO THOSE WHO YOU KNOW WILL BE SUPPORTIVE. THE MORE POSITIVE REACTIONS AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE YOU RECEIVE, THE BETTER YOU WILL FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF AND CHOICE TO COME OUT.

(SEE PAGE 17+ FOR LGBT+ SUPPORT GROUPS)

FIND A COMMUNITY

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS WHO WILL SHARE THE SAME STRUGGLES AND JOYS MAY OPEN UP A NEW DOOR TO FRIENDSHIPS.

MY COMING OUT...

MY COMING OUT WAS NEVER STRAIGHT FORWARD, IN FACT I AM STILL NOT SURE IF, WHEN ALL THINGS CONSIDERED I HAVE YET TO COME OUT. FIFTY FOUR YEARS' WORTH OF LIVING A LIE, A FAILED MARRIAGE, FIVE CHILDREN AND A SECOND ATTEMPT AT HAPPINESS CAN SURE LEAVE YOUR HEAD SPINNING AND MAKE THAT PHRASE SOUND SOMEWHAT TAME. CERTAINLY NOT SCARY.

MARRIAGE WAS FOR ME RIGHT AT THE TIME, AT A TIME WHEN I KNEW NO BETTER AND KNEW NO OTHER WAY TO HIDING MY TRUE FEELINGS AND MY TRUE IDENTITY. ON THE OUTSIDE A MAN, ON THE INSIDE A WOMAN, TEARS FOR WHO I SHOULD HAVE BEEN AND PAIN AND ANGUISH FOR WHO I AM - YOU MIGHT SAY.

I WAS AS ATTRACTED TO THE SAME SEX AS MUCH AS I WAS TOO THE OPPOSITE SEX. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT EVEN UNTIL THIS DAY I HAVE NEVER MET A GUY I WANTED TO WAKE UP NEXT TOO. BEEN TO BED WITH PLENTY, BUT TO COIN A PHRASE HAVE ALWAYS GONE BEFORE THE COCK CROWS.

MANY YEARS ON FROM MY MARRIAGE I STILL FEEL I AM THE SAME PERSON ON THE INSIDE, THE ONLY CHANGES I SEE WHEN I LOOK IN THE MIRROR ARE ON THE OUTSIDE.

IF I HAVE "COME OUT", THEN TO MYSELF IT WAS NO GREAT SURPRISE, BUT WHATEVER I DID DO TO IMPROVE MY LIFE HAS BROUGHT ME MORE FRIENDS THAN I LOST AND GIVEN ME MORE PEACE OF MIND OVERNIGHT THAN I HAD KNOWN IN FIFTY FOUR YEARS OF LIVING A LIE. A RIDE I WOULD THOROUGHLY RECOMMEND TO ANY THRILL SEEKER.

MY REASONS FOR HIDING AWAY FOR SO LONG ON REFLECTION MAY HAVE BEEN MORE OUT OF FEAR OF WHAT MY PARENTS WOULD SAY RATHER THAN WHAT MY PEERS WOULD SAY, BUT AS A CHILD WHO HAD NO ONE TO CONFIDE IN AND VERY FEW FRIENDS, HIDING MY TRUE FEELINGS WAS BY FAR THE BEST OPTION AT THE TIME, AND IN A TIME IN LGBT HISTORY WHEN THE PEOPLE WERE NOT AS UNDERSTANDING, FORGIVING OR AS ACCEPTING AS THEY ARE TODAY BEST KEPT THAT WAY.

FEARS, TEARS AND I SUSPECT ONE TOO MANY BEERS, I THINK ON REFLECTION MARKED THE PASSING OF TIME WHEN I MASQUERADED AS A GUY, IN A MARRIAGE THAT LIKE ANY OTHER MARRIAGE HAD ITS GOOD AND BAD TIMES, BUT ONE THAT PROBABLY FOR ME WAS ILL FITTING. BUT I GAVE IT MY BEST SHOT.

COMPLEX STRESSFUL AND FRIGHTENING DO NOT GO ANYWHERE NEAR DESCRIBING THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH AND ADOLESCENT YEARS, I JUMPED INTO A MARRIAGE WITHOUT LOOKING, UNTIL IN DESPERATION I SHOWED THE WORLD AND ITS DOG THE REAL ME, I WALKED AROUND IN A SORT OF A DAZE I HAD SPENT MY SAD EXISTENCE UNTIL THAT DATE BEING BUMPED FROM PILLAR TO POST.

MY ADVICE IF I AM ALLOWED TO GIVE SOME WOULD FIRSTLY BE NOT TO LET YOURSELF GET STUCK ANYWHERE YOU CAN'T BE YOURSELF, BE THAT A MARRIAGE OR A RUN OF THE MILL RELATIONSHIP. ALL THINGS IN LIFE ARE FLEETING EXCEPT YOUR FEELING AND MEMORIES WHICH STAY WITH YOU FOR EVER, AND IF LEFT UNCHECKED CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH.

SECONDLY COME OUT AS SOON AS YOU CAN RAIN OR SHINE AND WHEN SOMEONE THROWS A STONE OR AN INSULT AT YOU, DUCK. YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE.

MAYBE THE REASON YOU WERE BORN IN THE FIRST PLACE WAS TO LIGHT THE PATH FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW AND SHOW THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER TRANSGENDER.

- POPPY
ROSE

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE WIFE...

'I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE WIFE'
WHAT IS THE WORLD COMING TO,
WHERE DID MY YOUTH GO,
HAS SO MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE I WAS YOUNG,
MAYBE I'LL NEVER KNOW.

AND EVEN THOUGH MY REFLECTION,
IS NOW A STRANGER TO MY YOUTH,
HAVE I REALLY CHANGED THAT MUCH,
NOW I'M OLDER IN THE TOOTH.

PLAYING THE PARTNER BUT NEVER SUITED TO THE ROLL,
I COULD HAVE BEEN THE PERFECT LOVER IF NOT FOR THE LIES I'VE TOLD,
HURTING INSIDE WHERE NO ONE BUT I CAN SEE,
TEARS AND EMOTIONS THAT NO ONE UNDERSTANDS BUT ME.

NO PRISON BARS, NO CHAINS, NO ESCAPE,
HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS LIFE CAN I TAKE,
THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS LEAVE ME SO CONFUSED,
THIS IS NOT A LIFE THAT I CHOOSE.

MARRIED ONCE JILTED TWICE,
IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE,
INSTEAD OF PLAYING GAMES LIKE HIDE AND SEEK,
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE WIFE.

-POPPY ROSE

MY COMING OUT...

I WAS 51 WHEN I REALISED THAT I WAS ATTRACTED TO MEN, IT WAS NOT SOMETHING THAT JUST HAPPENED OVERNIGHT, AND I REMEMBER SEEING A MIDDLE AGED GUY ON A NIGHT OUT WITH SOME FRIENDS AND COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF HIM. I LAUGHED IT OFF AND TRIED TO PUSH IT TO THE BACK OF MY MIND SO I COULD ENJOY THE REST OF MY NIGHT OUT, BUT IT WAS A FEELING THAT I CAN'T PUT INTO WORDS. I WENT HOME FEELING CONFUSED AND A LITTLE DISGUSTED WITH MYSELF AS I HAD CONSIDERED MYSELF TO BE A LADIES' MAN, AND THE THOUGHT OF TWO MEN HAVING SEX WAS NOT NORMAL.

I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT AROUND THAT TIME I NEVER KNEW OR EVEN MET ANY GAY PEOPLE BUT, MANY YEARS DOWN THE LINE, I HAVE LEARNT THAT NOT EVERYONE IS "OUT" FOR WHATEVER REASON.

EMOTIONALLY, IT HAS BEEN A ROLLERCOASTER BUT IN A POSITIVE WAY. I HAVE LEARNT TO ACCEPT MYSELF FOR WHO I AM PLUS TELLING MY FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS WAS A WEIGHT OFF MY SHOULDERS.

MY ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE IN THE SAME BOAT... GO WITH YOUR FEELINGS, THERE IS INCREDIBLE SUPPORT FROM THE NORFOLK LGBT+ PROJECT AND FAMILY AND FRIENDS. REGARDLESS OF OUR SEXUALITY, WE ALL DESERVE HAPPINESS.

- T. 53.

MY COMING OUT...

I WAS BORN IN THE GENERATION WHERE YOU GOT MARRIED TO A MAN, HAD CHILDREN, STAYED AT HOME TO LOOK AFTER THE KIDS AND KEEP THE HUSBAND HAPPY. NEVER IN A MILLIONS YEARS DID I THINK I WOULD HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE WHERE I AM NOW...HAPPY AND DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN.

I WON'T SAY IT WAS EASY BECAUSE IT WASN'T BUT IT HAS BEEN WORTH EVERY TEAR SHED AND ALL THE PAIN THAT I HAVE FELT OVER THE YEARS OF DENIAL, I AM SORRY FOR THE PAIN THAT I CAUSED MY HUSBAND BUT THERE COMES A POINT IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU HAVE TO BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.

OVER AND OVER IN MY OWN HEAD I KEPT TELLING MYSELF THAT LIFE WAS TOO SHORT, I WANTED TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM LIES AND PAIN. I DON'T REGRET HAVING MY CHILDREN, JUST BECAUSE I AM A LESBIAN DOES NOT MEAN THAT I DIDN'T WANT CHILDREN, THEY WERE ALWAYS IN MY FUTURE AND I SHALL ALWAYS BE GLAD THAT I HAD THEM.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE CHILDREN ALL FINISHED UNIVERSITY THAT I CAME OUT TO THEM, I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT NOTHING INTERRUPTED THEIR STUDIES BUT SURPRISINGLY THEY WERE ALL VERY SUPPORTIVE.

I THINK DEEP DOWN THEY BOTH KNEW THAT THEIR FATHER AND I WERE NOT REALLY HAPPY BUT NEVER SAID ANYTHING. FROM THE MOMENT I LEFT THE FAMILY HOME IS WHEN I KNEW I COULD FINALLY BE MY TRUE SELF. FOR ME, BEING TRUE TO YOURSELF MEANS TAKING TIME TO KNOW YOURSELF, TO ACCEPT AND LOVE YOURSELF FOR WHO YOU ARE AND WHO YOU BECOME.

I DIDN'T GO RUSHING OUT TO FIND A WOMAN TO LOVE, THAT CAME NATURALLY AND IN ITS OWN TIME. 14YRS ON AND WE ARE STILL IN LOVE, STILL IN LOVE LIKE THE FIRST DAY WE MET.

MY ADVICE TO ANYONE IN THE SAME SITUATION...BE TRUE TO YOURSELF AND WHEN YOU DO, YOU WILL NEVER LOOK BACK.

**NORFOLK LGBT+ PROJECT IS A COMMUNITY BASED CHARITY,
PROVIDING SUPPORT THAT IS RELEVANT TO THE HEALTH AND
WELLBEING NEEDS OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN NORFOLK
AND WAVENEY.**

THIS IS ACHIEVED BY:

- **EMAIL & PHONE SUPPORT**
- **1:1 APPOINTMENTS (PLEASE BOOK)**
- **LGBT+ SUPPORT GROUPS.**
- **SCHOOL OUTREACH WORK**
- **SEXUAL HEALTH OUTREACH WORK**
- **RESOURCES**
- **TRAINING**
- **LGBT EVENTS**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE WORK THAT
WE DO AND THE SERVICES THAT WE PROVIDE,
PLEASE EMAIL US AT [INFO@NORFOLKLGBTPROJECT.CO.UK](mailto:info@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk) OR
CALL 01603 219299.**

LGBT+ SUPPORT



WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

IS SERVICE THAT PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE QUESTIONING LIVING IN NORFOLK AND WAVENEY. THIS IS ACHIEVED BY EMAIL, PHONE AND 1:1 APPOINTMENTS AS WELL AS A DROP IN GROUP HELD EVERY OTHER SATURDAY.

EMAIL: WSW@NORFOLKLGBTPROJECT.CO.UK

PHONE: 01603 219299

NORWICH LGBT MEETUP

IS A MIXED MALE AND FEMALE GROUP FOR THOSE OVER THE AGE OF 18 WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBT AND PREFERABLY LIVE IN NORFOLK. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING US FOR SOCIAL EVENINGS AND EVENTS THEN PLEASE EMAIL US AT NORWICHLGBTMEETUP@HOTMAIL.COM OR SIGN UP THROUGH THE MEETUP WEBSITE WWW.MEETUP.COM



TIMEOUT IS PART OF NORFOLK LGBT+ SUPPORT SERVICES, WE PROVIDE EMAIL, PHONE AND 1:1 APPOINTMENTS FOR GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE QUESTIONING. THERE IS ALSO A DROP IN GROUP THAT MEETS THE 2ND MONDAY OF EACH MONTH, 1PM-3PM.

**EMAIL: TIMEOUT@NORFOLKLGBTPROJECT.CO.UK
PHONE: 01603 219299**

NORWICH MATURE GAY COMMUNITY

A GROUP OF MATURE GAY MEN, THEIR FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS. WE HAVE A REGULAR INFORMAL SOCIAL GATHERING AT LOLLARDS PIT PUB, RIVERSIDE ROAD, NORWICH ON THE THIRD FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH, FROM 8.30PM.

WE ORGANISE A DIVERSE RANGE OF WELL ATTENDED OTHER ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING WALKS, QUIZ NIGHTS, COFFEE MORNINGS, FILM AND THEATRE, AND DINING OUT. WE ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO ORGANISE AND LEAD EVENTS AS WELL AS PARTICIPATING IN THEM.

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN THE FACEBOOK PAGE AND HOPE THEY WILL COME ALONG TO EVENTS. WE WANT EVERYONE TO USE THE FACEBOOK PAGE TO SHARE SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND FEEDBACK AND WE KEEP MEMBERS UP TO DATE OF EVENTS BY EMAIL TOO.

**FB: NORWICH MATURE GAY COMMUNITY
EMAIL: NORWICHMGC@GMAIL.COM**

Norfolk *Trans-Forum*

NORFOLK TRANS-FORUM IS A SELF-HELP SUPPORT GROUP FOR MALE TO FEMALE TRANSEXUALS AND THOSE QUESTIONING THEIR GENDER IDENTITY, AGED 25 AND OVER.

MEETING MONTHLY IN A SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL VENUE IN NORWICH WE PROVIDE A FRIENDLY AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATED TO GENDER IDENTITY AND TRANSITION.

WE ARE NOT A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING SERVICE BUT WE ARE HAPPY TO SIGN POST TO RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.

EMAIL: TRANS@NORFOLKLGBTPROJECT.CO.UK

PHONE: 01603 219299



FTM NORFOLK

FTM NORFOLK – A MONTHLY SOCIAL GROUP FOR THOSE WHO WERE ASSIGNED FEMALE AT BIRTH AND IDENTIFY DIFFERENTLY, OR WHO ARE QUESTIONING THEIR GENDER IDENTITY. WE ALSO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS.

EMAIL: TRANS@NORFOLKLGBTPROJECT.CO.UK

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