



The story of us



Matt Te Whata McClutchie

I always knew I was different. From an early age, I never wanted to do what the other boys were doing.

I never noticed which girl was "hot or not". I never showed any interest in anyone at all. I was, until the last few years, inept to the idea of sexual orientation or attraction. But I just put that down to me being the pinnacle of cynicism. When I entered High School, things changed. A lot. I suddenly had these surges of infatuation with people, but the thing that struck me as odd; they were all males. Throughout Year 9, I just assumed it was some chemical imbalance in my under-developed brain and that it would pass. But it didn't. I then came to the conclusion that I was experiencing some form of hysteria, hanging around females too long. Then, come Year 10 and a Deputy Head Boy. I prided myself on being an insufferable know-it-all, yet when came to addressing the problem of identity, I was drawn a blank. I had a very vague idea of sexuality, my experience being limited to very offensive and evasive cartoons, but I was taught me feelings were not "just a phase", that I wasn't having the wrong feelings. I was taught more about myself then, more than I believe I ever will. I left it for about 6 months until I had confirmation of my feelings. "I am Gay". Three words that would forever change my- what I thought was- formulated idea of self-worth and identity.

My self-realisation was met with a sudden fear. A fear that made me physically sick. Deep in the pits of- what I have been told is- my soul. I feared that I would face an impossible situation for me at the time. I didn't fear my family and friends would reject me. I couldn't have cared less, but I feared, for the first time in my life, that I would be letting my parents down. I felt that being different made me a disappointment, to an extent. I felt horrible. There was a part of my Year 10 life where I spoke to no one about anything, I completely shut down in order for me to deal with the constant back-and-forth of predictions in my head. I shut down until a third-way into Year 11 until I finally spoke the words I had been dreading for 7 long months. I picked my lip off the ground, braced myself and dove in head-first. I sat my friends down and said "So guess who just came out? Me. Right now."

I sat there as a few befuddled looks went around the room. One of my friends piped up after about a minutes silence and asked "Are you sure?". I sat there and nodded. My friend looked me in the eye for another silent minute, which felt like a lifetime. He then stood up and left the room. After a few friends congratulated me on me coming out and comforting me, my friend returned. He returned with

my best friend who both stood there staring at me as the room fell silent again. An aeon passed as a massive smile grew on my friends faces, to which my best friend exclaimed "You lost me \$5 you bastard!"

My journey is no great struggle, in fact, I would go as far to say that my self-realisation and my coming out surpassed my expectations of what I had formulated as a prediction of events. In terms of how well it went. Yet I would be beside myself and riddled with regret and guilt if I weren't to tell people. It is never as bad as you think it will be. Never. People need to realise that we, as a people have an obligation to be happy, and you cannot be happy until you are true to yourself. I know you may be scared, or you may be lost, but I am a living testament that your fears do not control you. There is always someone there who will reach out a hand, you need only reach out and grab it.



Lynk Jukes

My story begins at around the age of nine years old. I had just moved schools. It was 2010, which was when everyone found it really cool to call everything in sight "so gay".

I never had any real friends at that school. I didn't fit in. But I did have people to hang out with. Even if they didn't like me. I remember sitting around while the people who were my "friends" called everything gay. They didn't really mean any harm, they just wanted to look cool, but tell that to nine year old me. One day I told them to stop. The reply I got was "What are you a lesbian or something?". That's when I thought that maybe I was. I was scared of it, not knowing anything about the subject or anyone who was like that. The only thing I knew was that the people I was hanging around weren't very open minded. I didn't know what to do with the thought since I did like boys so I put it aside for another day.

Four years later, when I was in year 8, I saw this girl and it brought the feelings back. I thought, "oh yeah, I forgot about that". I literally procrastinated my sexuality four years. I decided that I was bisexual, since that was the only explanation I had because I still didn't know a lot on the LGBT+ subject. I slowly came out to all my friends, accidentally coming out to my brother along the way. I was pretty okay with myself in that sense. But there was other stuff going on at this same time. I ended up with depression and no one knew why, not me, not my friends, and not any counsellor. I was admitted to counselling but it didn't help, so I stopped going. Nothing was working so I didn't think there was a point to life. I don't think people understand fearing yourself because of how capable you are of doing something so permanent. It's so scary having yourself as your enemy because there's nothing you can do but take everything you're doing to yourself. I was getting really down. It was like cycle; I'd be left to myself, then someone would tell the counsellors, then I'd be referred there again, go there for a few weeks, then stop going. It went on for a few years, eventually when my mum got called she told me that I didn't have to go back. During this time I had also developed an eating disorder, I never knew why. The eating disorder was never the reason for counselling though. It was just there. Looking back at it now, I know exactly why I was doing it. It wasn't necessarily wanting to be skinny, it was not wanting the body I had. I wanted a boy's body. But I didn't know this. Until one day when I was walking to school in year 9, something just clicked. It was the

weirdest feeling. I thought, "what if I'm not a girl?". That really messed me up because I had no idea what was going on. I felt like a boy, but I also still felt like a girl. I didn't know what it was. A few months later I came across gender fluidity. I felt more secure when I finally found out it was real what I was feeling. I didn't tell my friends though, I had already gone back in the closet before high school. I didn't want them to know a thing about me. I did eventually (when I found out about it) come out to them as Pansexual, and they were all fine with it. But I never really came out as genderfluid. It was just a thing that was there. Another year went past and I had that weird instant click again and it told me "You're a boy.". It took me a few days but I finally came out to my friends as transgender. They accept me and everything, but sometimes I feel like they don't know how to speak to me. But they're trying, and that's what counts. I am now out to everyone and am okay with who I am. There are times where my past has come back to haunt me but I know how to deal with it now. Things take time. One of my friends told me during all of this, that it comes in parts. That was comforting and is completely true. I am still young so there is still a lot of my journey to come. Some things may not be easy, but I'll be forever grateful that I always had something stopping me from ending it completely. Because I would missed out on a lot of cool experiences.

I am a Pansexual Transboy, this is me. I am Lynk.



Charly Walsh

As I look back on my life, I often wondered why things never seemed quite right.

As I look back on my life, I often wondered why things never seemed quite right.

As a child, I did all the things little boys did. I cut my hair short, hung out with all the other boys. In fact, I thought girls were gross. Not once did I think this wasn't normal.

When I started kindergarten, I began to notice that people were treating me differently to all of my guy friends.

One day we had a special day at kindy where we could get our hair styled all fancy. I was really excited. So, my friend and I lined up and got ready. My friend went first and got his hair all spiked up with gel. I thought this looked awesome so I asked to have the same thing done.

But the teacher just laughed and told me to stop being silly. She gave me pigtails. I didn't really understand.

When at home, I loved nothing more than to surround myself with music. I really did try to participate but it just never really seemed to work. I did have friends and I did enjoy school, but everything just seemed a bit off.

Basic things were hard for me. Like using the bathroom. I tried the boys bathroom and was told to get out, so I tried the girls bathroom and was told to get out of there too. I was five.

From Year 1 to Year 12, I did not use public bathrooms at all. School swimming, PE, athletics days, cross countries, pretty much anything involving gendered spaces made me very uncomfortable and I wrote a lot of fake injury notes just to get out of having to get changed.

Primary school passed and as I got older I grew more and more aware that I was different to the other kids. I was really excited about intermediate, but... I was put in an all girls class. I made some amazing friends in there, but just wasn't comfortable at all. Everything was feminine and I didn't really feel welcome.

I started feeling really bad about myself. My attendance dropped a lot and by age 11 I was at CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) dealing with depression. I changed classes the next year and had a really good time.

Then came high school...

I had no friends during my first year and by Year 10 I'd had enough. I knew something was wrong with me and I didn't want to deal with it anymore.

I ended up in hospital because I was a risk to myself. I spent two weeks in Gisborne hospital and two weeks at Wellington hospital. When I was released I felt a little bit better being equipped with exercises to help me deal with anxiety but I still didn't know what was wrong.

In Year 11 my therapist said she thought she knew what was happening. She asked me if I thought I was a boy. My whole life literally flashed before my eyes - haircuts, changing rooms, and why my subconscious addressed me as "he."

I am a boy.

Now in Year 12, I am openly female to male transgender. I am on testosterone. My name has been legally changed from Scarlett to Charly and I am scheduled for top surgery.

In August, my parents and I started working through the court system to get a new birth certificate with my new name and a gender change. On the 13th of November 2015, we won. When I receive my new birth certificate, it will read male.

I have many friends ranging from gay, straight, to bi, and trans. My parents and my family have accepted me for who I am, and I know that there was never anything wrong with me. I can promise you that you will always have support from someone.

Narcy

People learn who they are at all different stages in life. Some know in kindergarten, whilst others know in their 40's etc. There is no time restriction on understanding yourself and what love means to you.

I moved from a small town to a big city when I was twelve. It was, at the time, one of the scariest things I had ever experienced. Sexuality was a lot more commonly spoken about when I moved. Or maybe I just noticed it more because it was becoming more important to me. I'm not sure.

When I reached year 10, I had two of my friends come out to me as bisexual. It was at that point where I started to learn about different sexualities.

During this time, I still hadn't come to think of myself as anything other than heterosexual, until I found myself developing feelings for one of my friends.

Although I knew I had feelings for this girl, the whole thing was very overwhelming, as I had come to know that she was questioning her gender. My immediate thought was that if she was a boy, would that mean I was still straight? Not only did I have to struggle with the idea of liking girls, but I also had to work out what it meant if I were to love someone who was born in the wrong body.

But for the time being, I came out to my Mother as bisexual. My life that year, began to revolve around the complexities of bodies.

When you pair sexuality with a body you have learned to hate, you slowly stop loving everything you used to.

Not understanding myself became a threat to my life. I was a direct threat to myself. I fell into depression and felt unworthy to the point where everyday I considered whether or not I was better off dying right then and there.

The scariest part about this, was not that I considered suicide as an option, but rather that I had so much support around me and I still considered it.

Yes, there were people that thought I was disgusting and that my sexuality wasn't normal, but all of the people that mattered in my life supported me.

I suppose my biggest fear, was that I would never find comfort in myself. My body became the perfect thing to put through pain.

In the end, I was losing a lot of weight in rapid succession. I was barely sleeping, and I was taking too many painkillers on a daily basis, in attempts at making myself feel happier. Trust me, it doesn't fix anything.

It's been two years since my idea of sexuality became more than just heterosexual. During these years, although I came out as bisexual to my Mother, I identified as openly pansexual for over a year. But recently I found myself at another predicament with my self understanding. I got to a point, where identifying as pansexual started to feel sickening. It was the kind of sickness that makes you feel dirty and like it would be easier to just get back in the closet and stay there.



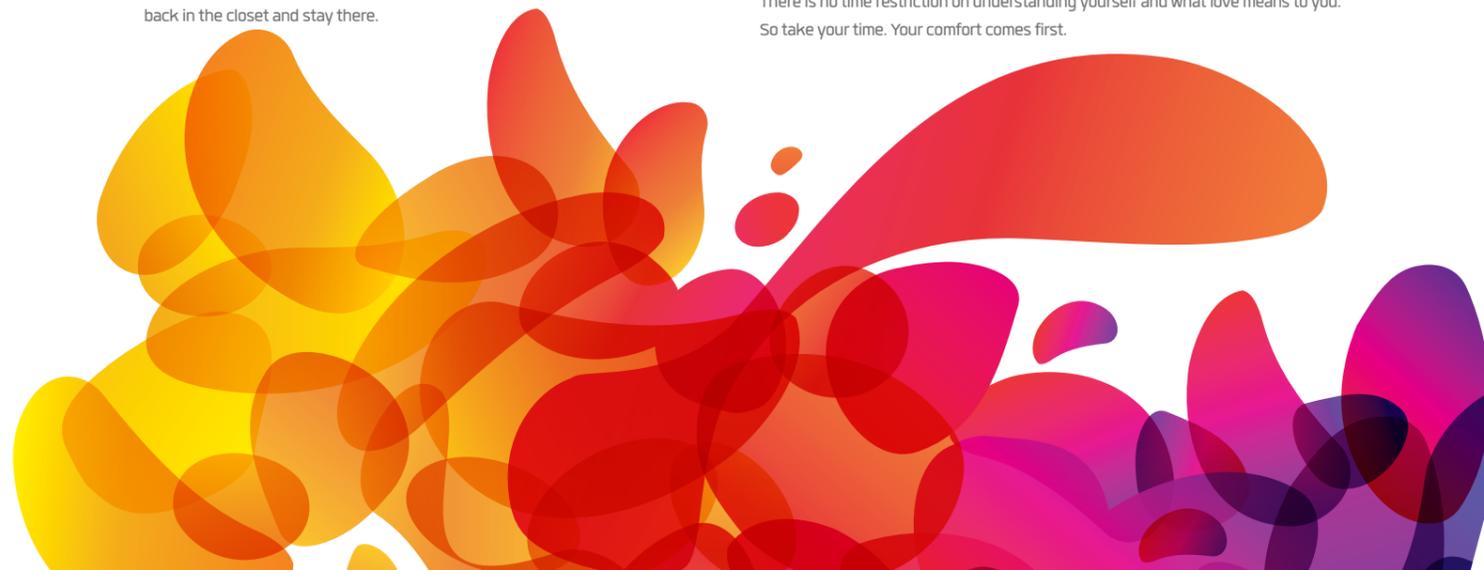
It was like I was back at the start of my journey, only this time, I hated everything that I was even more than before.

After months of contemplation I decided that I was a lesbian, but I couldn't say the word for so long. Almost as if my tongue was stuck. It took me forever to actually say it and not want to open up my stomach and fill it with something I thought was more beautiful than I saw myself.

Then, I came to like a boy. And I was terrified that I had failed myself and my friends and everyone who loved me. I felt like a liar. I came to like a boy who was born into the body of a female. And once again, I had to work out what it meant to love someone like that. I had to learn to look past bodies, even though I had spent the last two years dwelling on my own.

I still identify as a lesbian. And I still hurt a lot and wish I wasn't the way I am, but I learned from one of my friends, one of the greatest lessons I could ever learn: "... labels change, and we change. Sexuality is fluid. Not everything is set in concrete like we hope. And if it makes you happy to identify how you identify, then that's all that matters. Your comfort comes first." This has stuck with me and always will. Sexuality is huge thing. And it can be petrifying at the same time. But no matter what, you will understand yourself eventually. No one else can define your sexuality except you.

There is no time restriction on understanding yourself and what love means to you. So take your time. Your comfort comes first.



Hi! My name is....

Jesse James Mennie

I am 17 years old, a Year 13 student at high school, and I am bi-sexual.

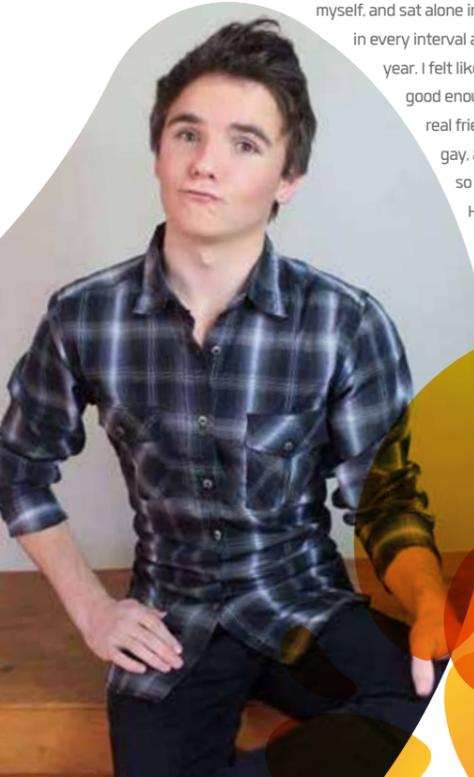
I grew up in Auckland but moved to Gisborne in early 2015 with my sister and solo father. All my life I have known I'm different from the other kids around me, but I just didn't know why. When I was 11 years old I got my first crush on a guy, and I finally realized what was so different about me. I knew I wasn't straight, but unfortunately... I just couldn't accept myself for who I was. I knew I liked girls but I found myself looking at boys the same way, and it made me question myself... Who am I? ... What am I? ... Growing up, kids at school would make out that being 'gay' or 'bi-sexual' etc. is a bad thing, and would be immature and make jokes about it, so I was lead to believe I was a bad person if I wasn't only attracted to the opposite sex. Not long before I moved out of Auckland, I had gathered the courage to come out for the very first time, and that happened to be to two of my closest friends at school. They said they were okay with it, but not long after that... the word started spreading. I went to a school where we were lead to believe that it wasn't normal to be LGBT. A school where nobody felt comfortable to come out and be proud of who they are, without feeling like they would be put down for it. After a little while I started to get teased and emotionally bullied for not being "normal". People used to tease me and lower my self-esteem and make me feel unwanted and unappreciated. Being a well-known student did not help with this issue... that began to be the only thing people would think of me as – "not normal – gay". I could have stood up for myself and made people understand that being LGBT is not such an uncommon thing, but I couldn't. I didn't feel proud about my sexuality, and especially me not fully accepting myself didn't help either. At this point in time I had pretty much shut down, I isolated myself and just tried to get through each day as it came... and life began to become very dark for me. I lost all self-confidence and charisma, and made myself believe I wasn't accepted for who I am. I felt alone. When the move came, I was glad to leave. All I wanted to do was create a whole new start, and just keep my sexuality to myself. I moved in the Term 1 holidays of 2015, and started at my new school at the beginning of Term 2. Coming from the big city to a small town like Gisborne was not easy for me. I didn't know anybody here other than my grandparents, and I felt alone. I had no friends... and no self-confidence. I had a very hard time trying to fit in at my new school, and it took a long time for it to happen. I sat in my new classes by

myself, and sat alone in the corridor with my headphones

in every interval and lunchtime for the rest of the year. I felt like I didn't belong, like I wasn't

good enough. In April 2016, I met my first real friend at my school. He's openly gay, and him and I have gotten along so well, we pretty much "clicked".

He had helped me a lot with my self-confidence and made me feel wanted, and appreciated



once again.. I felt so comfortable with him that I told him about my sexuality, and he was super supportive of me. He was the first person ever to make me feel comfortable in my own skin.. to make me realize that I was normal, that I wasn't an unappreciated 'thing' that didn't belong. Since then I have met so many new people, and made so many new friends. I am no longer alone all the time, and I have all the help and support I have ever asked for. One of my favorite quotes is: "Nobody can make you happy, until you're happy with yourself first." – and in this case, this is absolutely correct. I have never agreed to something more. As time went on, my envision on my sexuality had completely changed. I used to think being LGBT was extremely uncommon and unaccepting, but now I realize it's much more common than I thought. I now have a lot of support through school, but also through my local LGBT Youth Group I had joined. I have a lot of LGBT friends, and we all support each other and it's just... it is honestly all I have ever asked for, to feel loved, appreciated and accepted. Since April 2016, my life has changed a lot. Thanks to all of the support I had built a lot of confidence back up, and I have finally become accepting of who I am. Recently I have come out, openly. And to my surprise, it was so much easier than I thought it would be. Everybody was accepting, and I did not get a single piece of hate out of it. All of my friends were so proud of me, and the support just went through the roof. I was amazed, I have never felt so happy with being who I am. To be honest I thought going to an all-boys school would've been worse to come out as attracted to boys, but it seemed to be so much better! None of the boys really cared, goes to show a smaller community is more accepting and supportive of each other. I was quite shocked when I told my family as well, apparently they all knew, they were just waiting for me to say it. I told my whole family one-by-one, and I told my grandfather first. He was the one to say that secretly they were waiting for me to come out, and he was super-supportive of me. When I told my grandmother, she told me she had known since I was 10 years old and was telling me stories on how she could tell. She had known longer than I have! But the only person I was afraid to tell, was my father. Especially him being a solo-parent, he wouldn't quite understand the whole situation. Not long before I told him, my aunty and grandparents told me that over the years they had been planting little seeds in his head, little ideas just to see how he'd react when I would eventually tell him (even before I told them), so they told me not to be afraid. When I eventually did tell him, he had full support and told me he loves me no matter what... to be perfectly honest, I cried. Just thinking about all that has happened within the past four months.. it's amazing. I am so proud and grateful for everything, all the love, the support, it's absolutely amazing. So to everybody who hasn't come out yet, as any sexuality, I hope you realize that there is so much support out there. I just wish that nobody goes through what I did, not understanding how natural and common not being 'straight' is. Never let your self-worth sink, because it is absolutely useless. I wish I knew that. Please, just be proud of who you are, and love yourself for whoever you are, no matter what your sexuality is. If somebody doesn't accept it, that's their problem. Embrace your differences, be that star that shines in the darkness. You. Are. Unique. You. Are. Amazing.

**Today you are you,
That is truer than true
There is no one alive,
That is youer than you.
– Dr. Seuss**

Allie...

Hi, I'm a 15 year old student attending high school. I am bisexual. I'd rather not be named at this point as I haven't fully come out yet. I am intending to soon.

Hi, I'm a 15 year old student attending high school. I am bisexual. I'd rather not be named at this point as I haven't fully come out yet. I am intending to soon. I was born and raised in Gisborne. Since I was about 7 or 8, I had come to the realisation that I wasn't exactly like other people. I knew I was different. Since I was quite young and had been going through many problems at school and home, I pushed it aside and tried to ignore it. I didn't really know what was happening. I thought it was just normal to feel this way. As I started to grow up and move into intermediate and high school, my attractions towards both genders became stronger. I thought to myself that these feelings were, so to say, different. I didn't talk to anybody these feelings, because I never heard others making conversation about it. I kept quiet about my feelings and attractions, and I still am even though I have become more confident in showing my true self. As I entered year 9, I figured out that I had my first real crush on a girl, but of course I kept that to myself in fear of being judged. Since I was older, I knew what it meant and what was happening. I knew who I was. I had heard many stories about how it wasn't accepted in society as much as it definitely should have. I soon learned more about the LGBT+ community and realised there were so many others like me. Throughout the years up until now, I have met so many new people, most being gay, bisexual, transgender etc. and it makes me so happy. I came out to my sister and my Mum and they were cool with it. My mum saying "Oh, it's okay, we kind of figured that anyway" That kind of made me smile, it's good to know that they still accepted me for who I am. I still have the fear of 'coming out' as there is going to be so many different reactions. As I am still quite vulnerable because of past issues, the littlest things can trigger bad things, but I do think I am ready to 'let the secret out'. I have learnt that no matter what people say about you, they can't change who you are. You can't let others change you, you are you and that's all this will ever be. We are our own person, we are all unique in our own ways. I am proud to be bisexual and I definitely don't have shame in it, but I still fear the reactions of the rest of my family. It's a complicated situation, but I know that I can get through this, also having the support of many friends who have been through the same thing or are still going through this stage really helps me out as well. I have been given the privilege of meeting new people within the LGBT+ community due to our group Qmunity based here in Gisborne. I am very thankful for the help and support from everyone.

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment"
Ralph Waldo Emerson



**WE
ARE
ALL
THE
SAME
INSIDE**



Te Puni Kōkiri
REALISING MĀORI POTENTIAL

If there are any youth in our community who would like some support here are our contacts.
Facebook: Qmunity Youth Gisborne
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