

# I am who? You are what!

*(all names have been changed to protect the identities of those individuals featured in this article)*

Being same sex attracted leads to many different things. The whole process, from realising your newfound attractions, feelings and desires are like huge waves of fear wrapped in excitement. Just like the ocean, being same sex attracted and coming out, has its low and high moments, there are the powerful waves you feel will crush you, and then there are the times when the tide is calm, and it feels like you are in complete paradise – bliss.

“I realized I was same sex attracted when I was really young. I found myself looking at all the girls and having crushes on girls and not being interested in the boys. To be honest my first kiss was with a girl and I knew from then that’s who I was”. (Pina, 33, Italian background – has lived in Australia all her life)

“I used to think about the same sex and wonder if I was attracted just because someone was good looking, but I ignored the thoughts for quite a while”. (Santana, 25, Greek father – has lived in Australia all his life)

“I realised I was same sex attracted through (adventurous teenage antics)” (John, 30 something, Filipino, migrated in the late 1970’s)

People, who come from different multicultural backgrounds, can sometimes have a hard time experiencing same sex attraction. There are fears that they will lose their families and communities, have children taken away from them and in some cultures even fear they will be physically hurt or even killed. Being accepted is one of the most common problems we face. In some instances, our families and friends handle things a lot better than we ever hoped. Getting to this point takes time, patience and a lot of perseverance.

“I have quite a big family, especially on the Italian side. I am not really involved with all the family functions but that is because my father is not accepting of me and I refuse to go until I am accepted”. (Pina)

“My parents are divorced, both re-married. So my dad, doesn't know because being Viet, he would properly dis-own me! But my mum and step dad are very supportive! They handled it very well and mum wasn't surprised. lol. I'm the youngest of four and 13 cousins and everyone has taken it really well, I believe it has brought us all closer!” (Phillip, 20, Italian/Vietnamese – lived in Australia his whole life)

“My family have handled it pretty good actually, I've had very little bad feedback. My mum initially was shocked and upset, despite how 'liberated' she was, apparently, but she got over it and is fine with it and can see how my relationship/family is much healthier and equal than the typical 'nuclear' family”. (Lucile, 29, Polish/Maori)

“My mum thought I was doing it because I was mad at her, she actually believes that people who are gay have a mental illness! She is working on it though, and no longer thinks that gay people are ill. Despite her thinking lesbians are gross, she has always accepted my girlfriends (to their face at least)”. (Paola, 29, Chilean, came to Australia at the age of 8)

When people start to really accept themselves the whole world changes again, new challenges come to the surface but a whole new possibility of life opens up. Of course this doesn't happen instantly, it's something that once again, takes time and it takes being ready and doing it when and if you feel you can.

“I'm completely out and completely come to terms with it! It's the happiest I've ever been and never felt more like myself :)” Phillip

“I wasn't very good at keeping a secret. I'm out to some family and some friends and tell people who I know are impartial to the subject” Lucile

“It's important to be true and honest with yourself and be comfortable with who you are. It wasn't until I finally come out that I was truly happy and once I did, I fell in love with the person I want to spend the rest of my life with” Pina

“I have never officially 'came out' because I'm still in denial, I'm not sure that I will” John

“At the moment I have a girlfriend and am working on being able to come out completely. This has been a long procrastinating process, but I will get it done. It has taken a while I guess because I have been scared of the outcome of my dad's reaction. I know at the end of the day it's my life and the people who support me now are very important, but it's still just a scary thought the fact that he will know the girl who has been visiting is my partner. In order to not feel guilty about this anymore I have to tell him very soon” Santana.