

Fok jou, dad!

(3 chapters on being gay)

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DO I LIKE BOYS?

During my nursery school days, around the age of 6, the routine checkup by the nurses was quite the event. It was a day when they ensured every boy had the expected pair down there. Leaving that day, a peculiar thought lingered in my young mind—I imagined being the nurse, feeling my friends' private parts. It marked my first encounter with thoughts involving other boys. However, as quickly as it came, the idea faded. In primary school, my interests leaned towards girls, and thoughts about guys were nonexistent.

Fast forward to the end of Grade 6, during a boys-only weekend campout in our headboy's backyard. That night, someone suggested a game—an unusual one. We pretended to be gay, fully clothed, rubbing against each other in simulated acts. The game ended, but the lingering intrigue about doing something sexually with a male friend stayed with me. Minor incidents followed, embedding the memory and thoughts in my mind.

Throughout high school, my primary interest was in girls, and my fantasies mirrored that. While I dated girls, occasional thoughts about boys resurfaced. Yet, I never identified as gay.

Around the age of 16, during another camping trip with male friends, things took an unexpected turn. We got drunk, and one friend fell on me, initiating my first kiss with a boy. The sensation was different—a girl's mouth is soft and smooth, while this was firm, and I could feel his beard. It was distinct, but it felt more authentic than any other kiss.

Despite occasional encounters with my friend, I never envisioned a gay relationship for myself. My dream remained rooted in marrying a girl and having a family.

Being gay wasn't a thought I entertained initially. My perception of gay guys was shaped by stereotypes, viewing them as petite drama queens, not as manly individuals. This perspective was shaped by my small-town upbringing, lacking exposure to any gay community.

I once pondered why fine and petite gay guys didn't choose gay women who were more manly. It was a passing thought, but it reflected my limited exposure.

The debate over whether one is born gay or becomes gay continues. I honestly don't know. At 6 years old, fantasizing about touching my friends, was I already gay? At that time, my parents were still together, and it's doubtful I longed for male energy. I was

genuinely into girls, but a few experiences altered that perspective. Or perhaps I was into girls because societal conditioning dictated it was the right thing to do. Pushed for an answer, I'd say I wasn't born gay, but circumstances could have led me either way. An absent father, a craving for male energy, and an experience at 12—none of it feels like a conscious choice.

SEEMS LIKE I DO LIKE BOYS...

Arriving in Johannesburg, I was a stranger to the big city, and everything was thrillingly new for me. Through a friend, I met someone I really liked, and our time together evolved into a deeper connection. After a night out, we shared our first kiss in his car in a Hatfield parking lot. In that moment, it felt like the world could end, as I experienced a feeling I had never felt before—I was in love for the first time, and it was with a guy.

I never saw myself as gay, never imagined being in a romantic relationship with a guy. Yet, here I was, enamored, and I wanted the world to know it. He, however, was still in the closet and wanted to keep everything discreet. We saw each other, but he grappled with guilt. Being a Christian, he struggled with the internal conflict of whether this was acceptable or not. Eventually, he ended the relationship. It left me heartbroken, especially because I knew he also wanted to be with me but was in a battle with his faith.

After this experience, I became more open to the gay world, frequenting gay clubs in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The realization struck me—there were "normal" people there, guys just like me. Growing up in Harrismith, I held a stereotype that all gay people were flamboyant, but these experiences shattered that notion. For the first time, I met people going through similar struggles, and I started accepting myself as gay.

I entered a new relationship, my first official boyfriend, and we dated for five years. Subsequently, I had another relationship lasting eight years. Both these experiences were enriching, teaching me valuable lessons about myself and the world.

In my earlier years, I envisioned marrying a girl and having children. The reality of my sexuality differed from my expectations, but looking back, I'm grateful for how my life unfolded. After starting to date my first boyfriend, I came out to my mom, a challenging conversation as it is for many gay individuals. She accepted me and reassured me that her love remained unchanged.

I never explicitly told my brothers or my father about my sexuality. However, my dad once called and conveyed that I didn't need to hide anything, assuring me of his love. Though we never discussed it further, I sensed he was acknowledging my sexuality.

Discovering my sexuality at a relatively young age, I made peace with it and was honest about it. I am fortunate to have a family that accepted me for who I am. Sadly, I've witnessed close friends losing their families due to their sexuality, and many individuals

leading inauthentic lives or facing the tragic consequences of societal judgments, even resorting to suicide.

Religious beliefs, small-town mentalities, and various issues contribute to this challenge. It's disheartening as it robs people of living authentically and perpetuates pain. If I could speak to the younger Marnus, I would tell him that it's 100% okay to be gay, that he is not different, and being gay isn't confined to a stereotypical persona. You can be gay and be the best version of yourself. Acceptance is the key to being your true self, regardless of the challenges that may seem insurmountable.

COMING OUT AS GAY PUBLICLY

One night in Cape Town, while out partying, I crossed paths with the renowned radio personality Rian van Heerden. Having met Rian on several occasions before, both socially and for radio interviews, I always held a positive view of him. Rian, known for his controversial and outspoken nature, publicly came out of the closet years earlier, making headlines in South Africa.

During our encounter in Cape Town, Rian broached the topic of my sexuality, questioning why I wasn't publicly open about it. In response, I explained that while I wasn't concealing my identity, I didn't feel the need to display it prominently, like having a rainbow flag on my Facebook profile. Rian challenged me, arguing that this issue was fundamental and contributed to the ongoing challenges surrounding homosexuality in South Africa.

He made compelling points, emphasizing that many successful and famous individuals were gay but chose not to disclose it openly. This lack of visibility meant that individuals living in small towns remained unaware, perpetuating the notion that homosexuality didn't exist. Rian drew from his own experience of coming out, highlighting how it had positively impacted many people over the years. He stressed the importance of influential figures, such as Springbok rugby players, artists, and successful entrepreneurs, being open about their sexuality.

Inspired by our conversation, I took to social media the next day to share my story and publicly declare that I am gay. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and I became aware of the difference it made in the lives of those who privately reached out to me. Rian's perspective that night prompted a shift in my perception, and I hoped that more public figures would follow suit.

Looking back, I wished I had known how straightforward it could have been years earlier. Perhaps embracing my sexuality openly would have led to a different life and self-acceptance much earlier on.



With Rian van Heerden that night in Cape Town.