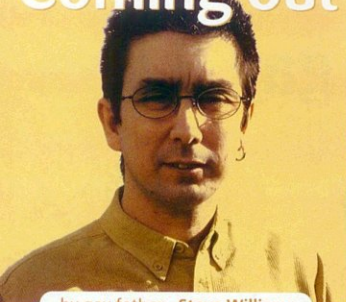


Coming out



by gay father - Steve Williams



I am a gay man that just happens to have four children. Many people have accused me of not being really gay because I have children, because I chose the conventional heterosexual route to having children.

Maybe there is an element of truth in that statement certainly from the evidence there must be. I got married. I had sex with a woman and I had children. So, on the evidence I must be straight, wouldn't you agree?



OK then, lets throw some other facts into this equation and see what happens. At 20 I had a two-year relationship with a guy, a very active relationship in every way. It didn't work out but it lasted two years - not two weeks as with many gay relationships. Then there was the marriage thing; I was desperate to have children. It was as though I could not move on with my life unless I had children, then I met 'her'.

I met this woman who was fascinated by gay men; she had been through a string of affairs with straight men and all were disasters and back then, the mid 80's, just about all music was gay. It was the age of the New Romantics, Boy George, Marc Anderson, Frankie Goes To Hollywood - gay images were all around. It just worked. I fell in love with my best friend who just happened to be a woman.

We both knew we-wanted kids and we knew that if we had kids we wanted to be married but we never worried which came first. Eight months after meeting she was expecting a baby so we went to our local church and the guy in the black dress said he could do a marriage in six weeks and that's what we did. My one mistake was not telling her I was gay until the eldest was a month old. I only told her then because I kept literally bashing into my old boyfriend and it turned out she knew him. I wanted to be the one to do the telling. It caused friction eventually but not at first, we spent years playing boy spotting together. After the third child things were becoming stressful and every little thing that went wrong was because I was gay. If the car broke down it was because I was gay, if the washing machine died, blame the poof. It was just one of those recurring situations. A car accident in 1991 left us with very changed circumstances, no car and out of a job. I was in deep depression, but she was broody and wanted a fourth. I could not think of any argument against it except we were broke, had no car and I was a mess but it was all my fault because I was gay, guilt won in the end and child number 4 was born in 1993. We were getting along. Me being gay was forgotten behind the everyday running of the household until 1995. There was this guy, he was young, he was cute and he was very available. After an evening of drinking I had sex with him. I told her the next day; I couldn't keep a secret like that. She was cool for several weeks then the crying started, the arguments, and the recriminations all over again. This was to be the final time my being gay was an issue, that year we really spoke about it, what it meant for the future. Every year after that things improved and we got closer and became, once again, the best friends we had started out being. Not lovers, never again could we be that. I came out 'officially' in the summer of 1998.

I went from a fat man with no friends to a slim man with more friends than I could keep up with. Within the year I had a boyfriend, it only lasted 7 months but hey ... 7 months, not bad! Now, up to date, where do we go from here? We have decided to try life apart. She needs to find a new lover and possibly a husband, she still wants more kids and still has time. I am going to keep the children, that's just what is going to work for us. I am 36 and she is 33, still young and full of life.

Meanwhile, how do you tell the very ex-ample of heterosexuality that they are the result of homosexuality?

How do you explain homosexuality to a six-year-old? Well, it's really quite easy. If sex itself can be explained openly then so can gay sex. It started off with me explaining that I was different to other dads, but I emphasised that this did not mean I was wrong. I told them that I loved their mum very much but that we were not like other mums and dads. Kids have an insatiable curiosity and with those few feed-lines the rest flowed naturally. They asked how I was different and I explained that whilst it was important for men and women to get together in order to make babies as they had already been told, this was not the only way (or reason) that people fell in love. I explained to them that their mum was my best friend in the whole world but that I found myself to be different. I said that what I was called, 'being gay'. My 9 year-old said "kewl" which took me by surprise and the younger girl, ever direct asked, "What's gay mean?" I explained it was when two men or two women were attracted to each other. Where they found each other's bodies attractive but not the bodies of the opposite sex. "So how did you have babies with mummy?" (She's so good when she gets going, my 6 year-old)



I said it was in the normal way between a lady and a man but it was only so we could have four wonderful children. "OK", she said, "Can we go to McDonalds now?" From then on it has been a subject like any other, they ask a question and either myself or their mum gives an honest answer that they will be able to understand without going any further than the question they asked. It has been explained to them that they can tell their friends but that not everyone thought being gay was OK. We advised them that if they told their friends that they might get picked on by some of them. It is very worrying but they needed to have that option to tell someone else not in the family. Fortunately, only the boy, now 11, has told a few friends and the general opinion still seems to be "kewl!"

Strange how things don't always work out as you expect them to! Things could still get awkward for them but we are a strong family unit and they will have no trouble telling me if anything makes them unhappy. We will get through any problems that may arise together. All the kids seem to have benefited a great deal from us both, as parents, being so honest and open with them. It's unlikely they have an ounce of prejudice between them and it seems to rub off on their friends too, it's a funny old world! We have two other children but they are, unfortunately, mentally handicapped so they are not really able to understand yet. The younger of those two, if you ask her what gay is simply answers ... "It's when a man loves a man and a woman loves a woman" She may not understand much but that simple description is so often overlooked in all the politics of the thing. How wonderful the wisdom of a child, how wonderful that these great kids are mine!

...the other side!