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Steve (right) and his partner Nick Bell bring up Steve's four children together

After 14 years of marriage and four children, Steve Williams, 38, from Northampton, divorced his wife Kris because he knew he was gay. Here, Steve talks about bringing up his kids with his partner Nick...

'Why my kids love having a gay dad'

I'd always dreamed of having kids. Since I was a teenager, when I saw babies in prams or children playing in the street, I'd yearn for them to be mine. I know it's normally women who get broody, but I couldn't wait to be a parent. Even though I was desperate to become a father, I also wanted to be with a man. I'd known I was gay ever since school. It wasn't that I didn't like women, I just fancied men. As a teenager, I had a few boyfriends. None of them worked out but they confirmed my sexuality. I met Kris while working as a messenger for a publishing company in London. She was a typist and I'd

pass her desk to pick up the post and would often stop and have a chat. All the other typists were cliquey and she seemed glad of the attention. We started going out for lunch and the more time we spent together, the more we got to know and like each other. I never mentioned my sexuality. It mattered what she thought of me and I wasn't sure how she'd react if I told her I was gay. In every other way except for fancying her, Kris was my ideal girl. We got on like a house on fire. She made me laugh and I could tell she fancied me - there was a glint in her eye whenever we were together. I began to think she was the answer

to having a family of my own. I'd never thought about settling down with a woman. But now the idea had been planted, I couldn't get rid of it. The following day, I asked Kris out. She jumped at the chance. We started seeing each other outside work. It felt odd the first time I kissed her. However, if I was going to make our relationship work, I knew there had to be some physical interaction between us. Kissing progressed to sleeping together. That felt even more strange. I'd never slept with a woman before, even though she was 22. I didn't just after Kris as I had done with boyfriends. But I loved her in my own way and

didn't want to lose her so I forced myself to go through with it. We began sleeping together regularly. Somehow, I got used to it. It was desperate to make Kris happy and when I saw her enjoying it, it made me enjoy it too. After three months, I proposed. I knew I was as serious about Kris as I'd ever be about a woman. I couldn't imagine having a family with anyone else. It came as no surprise when Kris said "Yes". "When Kris discovered she was pregnant just before the wedding it was totally unexpected. We'd both agreed we wanted children but had never thought it would happen before we tied the knot. It added to our happiness on our big day. Our son Jermaine was born nine months later. I was the first to hold him. As he wriggled about in my arms, my heart melted. I knew then how right I'd been to marry Kris. In the following years we had three more kids together: Max, Zoe and Daisy. However, the situation Nick came around to our house affected the family. The children weren't comfortable with things and began to get upset and I had to choose between happy families and Nick. There was no way we could carry on the way we were. I told Nick there was over. I could tell he was devastated and I felt sick at the

sexual frustrations grew stronger. I tried to put them to the back of my mind. But I'd find myself looking at other men on the TV or in the street. I'd tried to tell Kris I was homosexual ten years earlier, not long after Jermaine was born. I'd bumped into one of my ex-boyfriends outside a shop one day. When I'd smiled at him, Kris had asked who he was. She laughed when I told her he was an old lover of mine. She said I was in a straight marriage and refused to believe I could like men. But she was in denial. "When I informed her I was going to join a gay support group she reacted in a similar head-in-the-sand manner. She didn't try and stop me. She must have been aware we weren't a proper couple anymore. We'd stopped sleeping together soon after Daisy was born and become more like friends. I didn't want to have sex with her. We'd had the kids, there was no need. I could tell Kris was disappointed, but at the same time she accepted it was what I wanted. I found a number in the phone book and we were going to the next meeting. That's where I met Nick. He was one of the leaders of the group and we hit it off straight away. He understood my predicament and sympathised. I started looking forward to every meeting. I couldn't wait to see Nick. Before long, our friendship developed into a relationship. We'd see each other whenever we could and I felt I'd been released. All the emotions I'd bottled up for years, were finally unleashed. I loved Kris and the last thing I wanted was to hurt her. But my feelings for Nick were more passionate. I didn't hide my relationship with Nick from Kris. I was upfront from the start. I told Kris I'd met a great guy at the group, had feelings for him and had started seeing him. At first, Kris seemed to be fine with it. It was as if she'd accepted we were separate people, even though we were still married. After six months, however, the situation Nick came around to our house affected the family. The children weren't comfortable with things and began to get upset and I had to choose between happy families and Nick. There was no way we could carry on the way we were. I told Nick there was over. I could tell he was devastated and I felt sick at the thought of not having him in my life. But I loved my kids more than anything in the world. Nick understood that. Despite giving it our best shot for 14 years, things weren't never the same between Kris and I after that. We'd grown apart, were two different people. Finally, we decided to get divorced. It was worried what would happen to the kids. The last thing I wanted was to break my family up and the prospect of losing them was too painful to bear. We talked and talked about what to do and to my amazement, Kris agreed the kids could stay with me as long as she could see them whenever she wanted. "It wasn't an easy decision for either of us. But we put the children first and because I could stay at home, it made sense for the children to live with me. Nick and I are a couple now. We've been together for the past two years and he's accepted I had to try and make my marriage work for the kids' sake. He knows, in the end, it was him I wanted to be with. We love each other to death and he's great with the kids. Jermaine is now 15, Daisy is 14, Zoe is 11 and Daisy is nine. Nick treats them like his own. He loves them and they love him. It was a big adjustment for him at the start as he doesn't have kids of his own, but he just got on with it. I don't regret it. We're bringing them up and do a lot together as a family. I'm the primary parent as I stay at home to look after them while Nick goes out to work. I don't know what I'd do without them. Whenever it gets a bit much, he's always there to take care of the kids, give me a break. He's brilliant. "The kids seem to have accepted the situation. Luckily, Kris and I brought them up not to be prejudiced so they've taken it in their stride. It's not been easy. They've had grief from other kids and neighbours who can't seem to deal with it. But, ultimately, we're happy. "I'll never regret marrying Kris or having children with her. We are still close and she sees the kids about once a week (we have 50/50 access). At the end of the day, the kids have me and Nick as well as their mum. My children are my life. I couldn't imagine being without them. Kris is in a stable relationship herself now. I'm just glad it's worked out in the end. I couldn't have carried on as a gay man in a straight marriage for ever."

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