



TEEN queeries

by
Gaye Dell
&
Lucas Dell

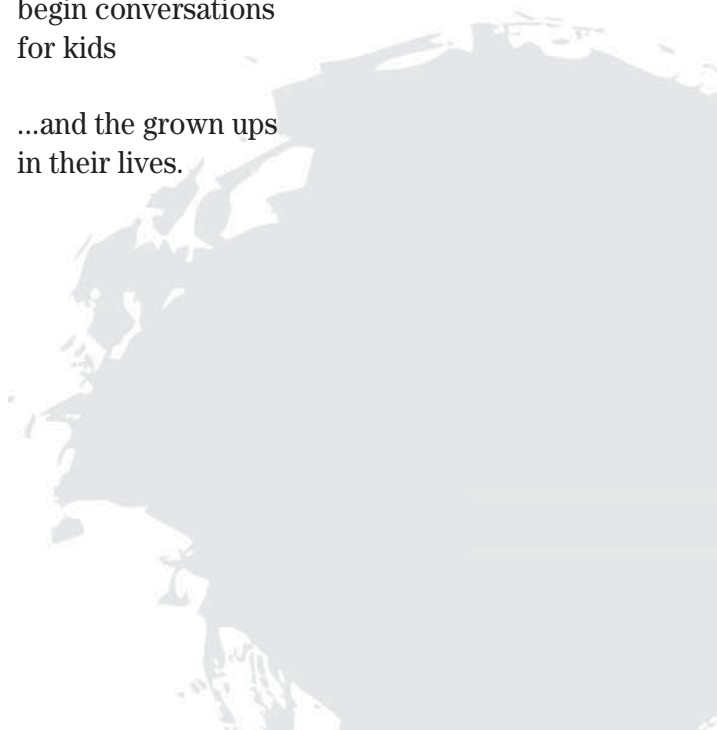
*An open conversation
between a gay teen
and his Mum*



TEEN **queries**

A book to help
begin conversations
for kids

...and the grown ups
in their lives.



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Who is this book for?

Everyone really. It is for boys and young men who are dealing with puberty and the possibility of being gay, all at the same time. It is also for those boys' parents, their friends, teachers, coaches etc. It is for anyone who has a teen queerie in their life...and for those of us that are just curious.

Why write a book like this?

It was written with the hope that it would help get conversations going; it always helps to talk about tricky subjects if you can come at them head on, put them on the table and talk freely and honestly. That's how these conversations began in our home. My son and I thought it may help others see things in a different light and maybe even more clearly. In any case, as kids go through puberty, there is an inbuilt curiosity about homosexuality and it is

not unusual for some of them to experiment with same gender sex. So, if nothing more, this will prove to be an informative, interesting read.

Who are these people!

Gaye Dell has had the most input here, she has published 11 books for kids , (check them out at www.gayedell.com). Turns out her son is gay. Why not write about the questions and experiences that have resulted from their journey together?

These conversations, in no particular order, were taken from a span of about 8 years, so some are quite naive and others ...well, not.

Questions have popped up along this (sometimes) rocky path, questions that are more than likely, pretty common between a parent and gay boy child. Their conversations make up this book.

This book may very well be comforting to others in the same circumstances, Gaye and Lucas hope so.

Queer ies:

How do I tell my parents?

This is probably the No. 1 question for most kids who understand they are (or suspect they may be) gay. “Telling parents” will be unique for every circumstance of course, because the cultural and/or religious expectations we all bring to the table, is unique for every family. The relationships all under the same roof (or roofs) are so varied; there may be a closeness or a distance already existing, when a child decides it is the ‘right’ time to drop the clanger. Some kids prefer to keep it to themselves because they are unsure how their parent(s) will react and that’s OK too. There’s always a choice...remember, it is your choice!

Lucas: I knew I was gay, but I thought my Mum would be disappointed in me if I told her. I’m lucky in that she thinks outside the box because she is a creative type, but I was still really nervous about telling her. I put it off for quite a long time. I have never met my Dad so it has been just the two of us all along, so we get along well most of the time.

When I was about 16, I felt comfortable enough in my own feelings to understand how I felt about boys. Up until that point I’d had quite a few girlfriends but there was always

an awkwardness and coldness, like I was just going through the motions with no real feelings behind it. At 16, I’d realised that my lingering looks were more directed towards the members of my own gender and slowly came to understand and accept my sexuality.

I figured the best way to tell Mum was to go for it and say it right off the bat. I didn’t pick a very good time because when I blurted out “*Mum, I think I am gay*”, she said quite matter of factly, “*Honey, let’s talk about this when we are not in the middle of the mall, eh?*”

She blinked a few times then without referring to my statement again, we went ahead and finished our shopping. She brought up the subject again on the way home. It was actually easier talking to her while she was driving because she was not able to look at me, so it felt more relaxed and easier for me to talk with her. She began the conversation again by asking me why I thought I was gay. I didn’t really know how to answer her, because for me, it was like asking me why my eyes were coloured blue. I realised she was just trying to understand.

Mum: The moment Lucas ‘came out’ to me was certainly memorable...my beautiful half grown kid comes out with a statement like that in the middle of the shoe department while I am are trying on the most gorgeous boots I’ve laid my eyes on...what possessed him to drop the big one right then, I am not sure to this day. In any case I went into shock; a kind of a denial really.

My brain went directly to guilt...did I 'cause' it in some way? I had been single for a long time, Lucas had no father figure at all and my long-term male friend was gay.

I'm enlightened enough to know it's not contagious for heaven's sake, but I wondered if my openness to close friendships with gay men had some kind of influence on my son.

a matter -of- fact?'

If it were nerve wracking for Lucas, it was mind blowing for me. He and I can generally talk about anything and everything, but this was new ground because he was so obviously nervous about it. I decided to take a matter-of-fact approach and asked him if he absolutely knew, or he if just suspected he MIGHT be gay. He said he was pretty sure.

Pretty sure; there was an opening, a doubt maybe? I decided to look at the possibility of a doubt and address that rather than embrace his whole-hearted gay-ness. It was just that I needed to sit with it for a while, to let the thought of it settle, to imagine how his being gay, would affect the life of my son.

In any case, I said to him as casually as possible as my racing brain would allow, *"Lucas, I think when you've had a chance to go 'all the way' it will be really obvious if you are or not. Why 'gay' or 'straight' in any case,*

why not stay away from the labels...or if you must, go with 'bi' for the time being? If you're gay you're gay and nothing will change that...and if you are not, you're not. If you're not absolutely sure at the moment, sit tight, you'll know if you're straight or gay soon enough. Let time help you with this one. There is no hurry, you know, so don't feel like you have to decide what you 'are' just yet, OK?"

Brilliant Ms Dell, put off the inevitable. Hmmm, Lucas agreed it was a good plan, but it was only a fortnight later that he sat me down (in our home and not in a public place this time), to tell me he knew he was gay, and that there was no doubt for him. It took me a little longer to get used to the certainty of it all.

I guess I felt some disappointment that he was not going to have a family and a child of his own. His arrival into my life was the most fabulous part of my life and I had led, shall we say, a rather colourful life and achieved some pretty high points along the way. The more I thought about it however, the more I realised that these days, it is possible to have any kind of family you want. Two Mums, two Dads, hey, with extended families and re-marriages, some kids have more than two. Take our family for instance, it had always been just the two of us. I had to let the realisation sink in at its own pace because it seemed like such a huge 'change' in his and my life. With retrospect insight, I know now that there were really no more changes than if he were straight.

What if my parents don't take me seriously?

Lucas: My Mum took me seriously enough, but I guess the way I told her left room for some doubt. I could see that she grabbed hold of that grey area with both hands and went with it rather than confront the knowledge of it all. After a couple of weeks of small conference style discussions with her though, I began to feel a little dishonest because I knew deep down I was gay, so I had to tell her. I'm not sure if it was the right way to tell her or not.

Mum: For me, it was the right way. It allowed me some time to get used to the whole idea, to do some living in the space/knowledge that my son was gay. It also allowed me some time to think about it and if or who I was going to tell...and how I would go about that. I figured there would be some resistance from some of our friends but not others, and I wondered how our extended family would react. I expected a little resistance due to a lack of familiarity with this situation. That turned out to be right, but more about that later.

How do I know if I am gay or bi-sexual?

Lucas: For me it was cut and dry. I didn't want to be with girls, but was interested in being with boys. I have some friends, both girls and boys that seem to be 'bi' because even though they have special friends of the opposite gender, given

the opportunity to fool around with the same sex, they go for it. I also suspect that some kids I know, are more interested in getting sex and in how often they can get it, and much less concerned about who they are doing it with.

Mum: When Lucas and I first spoke, I suggested to him that he may be 'bi' but he seemed unconvinced. I think puberty is a time to discover yourself and your sexuality is an integral part of that. Puberty is so confusing to most teens in any case, so trying to figure out if they're gay, straight or bi can be put on hold because time generally allows the clutter in young minds to settle a little and it becomes obvious which path is the right one for them. Often experimenting with sex is SO exciting, that who they 'do it with' is overshadowed by the thrill of it all.

Who should I come out to?

Lucas: My Mum and I have a pretty unusual closeness because it has just been the two of us since I was born. We lived a long way away from extended family, so friends became closer, but not quite as close as actual family. Mum and I shared everything with each other, so it was not an issue for me who I should tell first. I wanted to discuss it with a couple of really good friends at school at about the same time, but it seemed there was a lot of talk then about whether this kid was bi or gay or that kid was in fact straight, that I felt less exposed and it seemed like less of a big deal to tell my Mum before I told my friends. I knew I wanted to share with her as soon as I was sure, but I waited a little longer to tell my school friends.

Mum: I felt privileged that Lucas wanted to share so early in his realisation. It was a pretty special thing to go through together and cemented a lovely bond going into his adulthood. I was also able to support him and help handle the different situations that arose...like when someone would tell an off-colour, bigoted joke about 'fags, poofs or homos,' he knew there was at least one person that he could roll his eyes with and who would understand that the jokes were cruel and more often, really ignorant. Often nothing needed to be said, but both of us knowing was enough to make that circumstance tolerable.

When I look at it in retrospect, I feel so relieved that I was the one he trusted with such precious information because a lot of adults would have handled it differently and maybe not in a good way. When I told one of our close family members I considered pretty worldly for example, his response was that it would blow over when Lucas didn't need to be the centre of attention any longer. Wow. The inference was, of course, that Lucas was 'acting' gay to get attention...I'm thinking that would have been terribly hurtful for Lucas to hear and I'm glad that he and I had an opportunity to chat about the remark, rather than his having to carry hurt feelings (mixed with a little anger) with him all the way into adulthood. I was shocked that someone who was pretty well educated did not know that kids don't 'choose' to be gay, any more than they choose to have straight or curly hair!

Should I act gay or butch up?

Lucas: I like to read and I'm not really good at ball sports, so even when I was quite small I felt I was the odd one out most of the time. When I was in 5th grade, the jocks teased me about reading all the time, so to get them off my back my Mum suggested I play a bit of soccer at lunchtime. I tried it for a while but it seemed to me to be an excuse to hit and kick other kids! I played soccer anyway, and nearly kicked a goal once but the ball bounced back and hit me in the face. I ended up getting a concussion and was too embarrassed to get back on the field after that. I decided it just wasn't for me. I found out I could run fast though, so I turned my attention to athletics to get the jeers to a manageable level. It wasn't fun because even though I wasn't a delicate type, I didn't want to pretend to be butch either. Finding out how to handle who I was, didn't happen until I discovered kick boxing when I was late into High school, much later on. You don't have to butch up if you can disarm a bully with a few chosen moves, apparently.

Mum: Lucas was always pretty tough, high energy, but didn't enjoy the 'normal' boy activities. I didn't really think much about it because 'doing his best' was more important to me than what he was choosing to play. I just wanted him to be happy with himself so although we did the usual, soccer, basketball, kung fu, tennis, etc., etc., he enjoyed himself most when he could settle into a good book. These days he spends a fair bit of the time at the gym and is more interested in being healthy than being competitive...that's good.

To butch or not to butch that is the question!

Should I butch up
to make up for being gay?

Lucas: It never really sat right with me, but there were times I thought I should act a certain way to fit in better with other kids. Somehow when you are not really being yourself, it makes you feel who you really are, is not very valuable. That doesn't feel good, and in any case, you don't really fool anyone anyway. I decided second year or so of high school that I would just be me because no matter whether I 'butched up' or not, there were other things that were a little different about me that bullies would pick on. It seemed to me that everyone in high school got picked on at some time or another, even the popular kids, so I decided it was just a lot less stressful not having to act one way or another and just decided to be me.

Mum: Lucas was pretty centred about who he really was quite early on and other than not wanting to appear feminine because of his choices of haircuts or clothes, he seemed not to 'act' at being anyone else but himself. I have to say, I was really proud of him for that.

There were other kids in his high school that he knew to be gay and they appeared to choose either an ultra 'screaming queen' attitude or they moved further into the closet to avoid any ribbing from others. Lucas was comfortable with himself and seemed to behave just like a 'normal' kid, who happened to be gay.

Is it better to date older guys?

Lucas: When I was younger, I wondered if it were better to be with older guys because I figured they could show you the 'ropes' so to speak? I wasn't really attracted to old guys, so I never went there.

Mum: Here's the 'Mother Dearest' speaking, but I was really nervous about Lucas going out with someone older than a year or so than he. My limited knowledge from hear-say, was that there were a lot of older predator types in the gay scene...I guess I was hoping Lucas would have a relationship and not just a 'hook-up' particularly with his first boyfriend. I may add here that to an outsider looking in at the gay scene, it appeared to me that there were two distinctive types, the predator and the nurturer and lots of the latter had their hearts broken by the former. I am unabashed about my wanting to protect Lucas as much as possible, so I encouraged him to look for friends within a year or two of his own age, at least while he was getting more worldly.

gay and/or Christian?

Does being gay mean I can't be Christian?

Lucas: I have some friends that are from a strict Christian group and they have tried to 'save' me from my sickness. It's weird really, they didn't know I was gay and we became very good friends but then I shared I was gay, one of them told me she couldn't be my friend any longer because in her words "*to practice homosexuality is sinful. You have a choice though, practise abstinence or be healed from your sickness.*"

I know that the Bible is open to interpretation and that some Christians won't tolerate homosexuality while others see it as simply a human condition, without judgement. I have alternative spiritual views so it has not been an issue for me other than being 'dropped' by a friend whom I really liked and trusted.

Mum: Lucas has always been really interested in religions; I remember when he was about four years old he asked me "*Who is God, Mummy?*" The rather computer literate me, went straight to the internet (pre Google), and searched for 'god' and of course we got lots to choose from, consequently Lucas has had a pretty open mind with his spirituality and whether his sexual orientation

excluded him from practising, never really became an issue. I imagine it would be tough for some though, I was reading some literature dropped off in our letter box and it talked about a 'cure' for homosexuality. Lucas and I read the pamphlet together and we discussed it a little, but I am guessing if a child were raised in the strict code according to this religion for example, his orientation would be paramount. It would be a case of deceiving his religious instructors, or deceiving himself...not a good choice for anyone.

other gay guys...

How can I meet other guys?

Lucas: Unless I meet someone at school or the sporting club I belong to, there doesn't seem to be an easy way of meeting other 'like-minded' boys. I did go to a group that was run by a church once, it was loosely disguised as a group for 'troubled' teens, but the other kids were either gay, bi or transgender. They met once a week. They did not focus on any one issue but put a program together to help kids deal with leaving home, or living on the streets. My Mum encouraged me to attend and although she knew the other kids were a little alternative regardless of their orientation, she thought it would be good to be a part of a group that thought a little differently than the mainstream. For me it was a bit 'in your face' but reassuring at the same time to be in a group of kids who seemed so open about who they were.

One of the counsellors told us that before she took on the job with the group, she visited 'beats' throughout the Gold Coast which were generally pretty low-rent places, like public toilets etc. She was armed with a bunch of condoms which she handed to young boys who were trying to hook up with other gays there. It was interesting to listen to her and she had some great advice about staying away from that kind of stuff!

I became interested in a kid in the group but it didn't turn out well. I was quite young, probably 15 and my Mum drove me over to hang out with this guy. We just chilled at his house, but I found out the following week he had told everyone that I had gotten really physical with him. His stories embarrassed me so much I didn't go back after that.

There are plenty of online sites for meeting other gays but it wasn't my scene because they really just gave off the vibes of being meat markets. Also you never know if the person you are chatting with is lying to you, or even showing your conversation to his mates. Cyber bullying is so common, I just didn't want to take that chance.

Mum: Meeting other gays is hard for a teen. It is reported that approximately 10% of the population is gay, so if you take away around 51% of those who are girls, you don't have a broad base to choose from. I think the healthiest places to meet others is in safe environments like school, sporting clubs...pretty much the same kinds of places that girls and boys meet. The tricky part is being able to spot if they are gay though. Very tricky, there are no rules for that.

in or out?

If I know someone is gay,
should I out them?

Lucas: I wouldn't. In High School I told one friend I was gay and the very next day, five other kids came up to me ask me if it was true. Needless to say, I felt my trust had been betrayed and felt really gutted about it.

Mum: I imagine that would have to be the worst thing for a young person, that is to have their choice taken away. I would say a resounding 'NO' to that one. Someone's sexual orientation is their own business...no-one else's!

Why am I gay?

Lucas: I wondered if I am gay because I don't have any brothers or a father figure. I went on the internet with this question and found the following—helpful for me—information. It is not conclusive, but rounded out, it says that your 'gay-ness' is somehow caused by all or a combination of your genes, what happened while you were developing inside your Mum and/or your brain structure. Read on: *"No simple, single cause for sexual orientation has been conclusively demonstrated, but research suggests that it is by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences,^[1]*

(with biological factors involving a complex interplay of genetic factors and the early uterine environment.^[2] Biological factors which may be related to the development of a heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or asexual orientation include genes, prenatal hormones, and brain structure.^[3]

A combination of factors working here.. I found another interesting article from *TIME Science*:

“What makes people gay?” Biologists may never get a complete answer to that question, but researchers in Sweden have found one more sign that the answer lies in the structure of the brain.

Scientists at Karolinska Institute studied brain scans of 90 gay and straight men and women, and found that the size of the two symmetrical halves of the brains of gay men more closely resembled those of straight women than they did straight men.

In heterosexual women, the two halves of the brain are more or less the same size. In heterosexual men, the right hemisphere is slightly larger. Scans of the brains of gay men in the study, however, showed that their hemispheres were relatively symmetrical, like those of

straight women, while the brains of homosexual women were asymmetrical like those of straight men. The number of nerves connecting the two sides of the brains of gay men were also more like the number in heterosexual women than in straight men.

Just what these brain differences mean is still not clear. The Swedish study is the first to find differences in parts of the brain not normally involved in reproduction — the denser network of nerve connections, for example, was found in the amygdala, known as the emotional centre of the brain. “The big question has always been, if the brains of gay men are different, or feminized, as earlier research suggests,” says Dr. Eric Vilain, professor of human genetics at University of California Los Angeles, “then is it just limited to sexual preference or are there other regions that are gender atypical in gay males?”^[3]

Gays are different...but the same. Seems gay men are both masculine and feminine...in bed. Read on:

Vilain, notes that the brains of gay men possess only some ‘feminized’ structures, while retaining some masculine ones, and this is reflected in how they act on their sexuality. “We know from studies that men, regardless of their sexual orientation, retain masculine characteristics when it comes to their sexual behavior,” he says. Both gay and straight men, for example, tend to prefer younger partners, in contrast to women, who gravitate toward older partners. Most men are also

more likely than women to engage in casual sex, and to be aroused by visual stimuli. "So I expect that some regions of the brain will remain masculine even in gay men," says Vilain.

...for something as complex as sexual orientation, it's no surprise that everything from genes to gender to environment may play a role in ultimately determining your perfect partner. ^[3]

Mum: So much is written about this and more and more research is being undertaken, so there will be new findings as more research unfolds...it is relatively easy to keep yourself posted via the internet! It's a good idea to check current information periodically to keep yourself informed.

Why are some people so angry about others being gay ...why are they so bigoted?

Lucas: Lots of people seem to hate anything different from themselves, or things they don't know about. When you look at history people have hated each other for all kinds of reasons. I found it really fascinating to learn that hatred towards homosexuals is a relatively recent

attitude. For instance homosexuality was accepted and even celebrated in ancient cultures. In the ancient Greek army men were applauded for having male lovers as they then did not leave their loved one behind but fought alongside them in battle. Their great god Zeus, had male lovers like Ganymede who is now immortalised as the cup bearer Aquarius in modern astrology. Also Apollo took gay lovers like Hyacinth. Pansexual (love not restrained by identity, race, age or gender) came from the Greek god Pan who also supposedly brought masturbation into existence and taught it to young shepherd boys. Even the term lesbian comes from the fabled island of Lesbos where women were its only occupants.

Mum: I agree, if those people took the time to know a gay person they would probably find out they are pretty similar to themselves wanting the same things from life; happiness, to love and be loved. That's a huge ask though, to suggest to a bigot to consider the possible similarities to something they are almost always very ignorant about and usually prefer not to think about at all. Some can see it is just different, while others feel the need to push their beliefs on others. I think sometimes there is a nervousness too: *"What if that poofsta came onto me, I'd have to flatten him to let him know I'm not like that!"* Maybe it's even a fear of being raped...odds of running into a gay rapist are pretty slim. In any case a simple, *"No thanks mate, I like women"* is enough to set the records 'straight' once and for all.

What do
YOU
have to say?

...what others have to say
to teen queeries:

Ask questions! Just as mothers have insights that can help the development of boys, so straights have insights that can help the development of gays.

—Stephen, (52yrs), University Professor

When I was a teen, I thought I was the only girl in the world who was attracted to other girls. I was really lonely.

There ARE others like me out there.

**Have courage through the blue times,
as time will teach you, you are not alone.**

—Roberta, (45yrs), Primary School Teacher

After I realised I was gay, I hung around other gay men mostly, but then I began to miss women. I love to be around some women, I just don't want to have sex with them. I guess if I were to offer some insight, I'd say,

**“Being gay shouldn't
alter or hinder
your friendships
with anyone.”**

—Joseph, (68yrs) Fine Artist

**Don't let being gay
define who you are**

...you are a unique person first...your sexual preference is just one of the many details that make up the beautiful person you are.

—Gary, (64yrs) Graphic Designer

Don't worry, life gets better, was one of the most annoying pieces of advice I was given in my school days because for so many years, I didn't see that it would. Once I looked at my life from an outsiders' point of view, I could see the small changes that made life worth living and I could see more hope for the future.

**It is the small things in life
that matter;**

take enjoyment in them and remember that the world is a big place and one day you will be in a position to choose where you want to be in that world. —Julie, (22yrs) Uni student

I did the whole catastrophe...girlfriends, wife, child! When I got divorced and met a man I was attracted to, I realised what had been 'off' about my whole life. I had never actually made decisions about my life, but rather did what everyone else expected me to do.

**As a teen queerie
you get to choose
your life
yourself!**

That is certainly something to celebrate.

—Barry, (42yrs) Tax Auditor

Know that no matter how you identify yourself in this world—socially, spiritually or sexually—there are not only communities, but entire worlds that will envelope you in love and support. Never stop seeking these places.

***When you find your home,
not only will you flourish,
but you will never know shame,
only shine,
as you should.***

They are out there and probably closer than you think.

—Molly, (19yrs) Hostess

I lived in the Middle East for a while where being gay was punishable with serious prison time...it certainly shaped my behaviour. It was imperative to stay in the closet or leave the country. I had a successful career there that I was reluctant to abandon, and so it was a difficult time for quite a few years. It gradually wore me down however, and so I came to Australia where I have enjoyed the freedom of being who I am without the obvious drawbacks in the Middle East.

If you are a teen queerie here in Australia, you have the freedom to be anything you want to be...cherish that liberty and be 'you'. We really do live in the Lucky Country.

—Eddy, (44yrs) Business Owner

Lady GaGa said it right, "*Baby I was born this way.*"

Enjoy the ride.

—Wendy, (22yrs) Student

If you feel something to be true, give yourself permission to explore it first before setting your mind about it.

***If it is something you feel
with honesty,
then there is nothing wrong
with embracing it.***

Although there may be those who disagree with your decision, or potential life-choice, if you have courage and act without shame, they will eventually respect you.

—Rob, (21yrs) Dance major

When questioning who you truly are, try to remember that no answer you find is going to be forever. Everything changes, so explore who you are today, and be excited about the future. Try not to spend time worrying,

***just love the person
you are today!***

—Tom, (30yrs) Coven priest

The world is vast and we are but a grain of sand in the ocean. Moving to the flow of the thousands of waves of society. Remember though, a grain of sand can evolve into an iridescent pearl.

***Be yourself
Love yourself.
Shine!***

—Lleu, (22yrs) Shop assistant

Enjoy your awakening sex.

Question

***the thing that is considered 'normal'
and define yourself
without boundaries.***

Queer, Gay, Lesbian...these are labels we create to help others understand us, but they do not contain us. You may be as fluid and whimsical with your sexuality as you want to be

***—everything is natural
and nothing is normal.***

—Luke, (27yrs) Film-maker

more comments to come...

Now, your turn:

To ask either Gaye or Lucas a question
or to add a comment to support teen queeries:
Go to www.gayedell.com/Blog Teen Queeries

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TEEN queeries

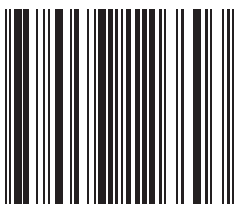
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