I’m 20 years old, and I used to go by bisexual, now I identify myself as a bicurious individual. Have I told my parents about it? No. Do I plan to? In the near future? I don’t think so.

I don’t hold any grudges against the older generations. Their homophobia is a result of a lifetime of orthodox education and close-minded society. While this explains their behaviour, it does not excuse it. There’s not much we can do about them, but what we can do is teach the coming as well as current generations.

My decision of not coming out to my parents is not an outcome of my embarrassment but my desire of saving them the trouble of changing their entire outlook towards me, only for me to realise that I, after all, don’t belong to the LGBTQ community (bi**curious**).

However, even for the short while I mistakenly identified as being a bi, I was never ashamed of what, rather who, I was. And this, I believe, was a choice on my behalf, and not a compulsion.

I could stop beating around the bush and tell you to embrace yourself, to love yourself, and to accept the choice of not being embarrassed of yourself. But I understand now that this is much easier said than done. That every individual is different, and that their train of thoughts, their situations in life, their psychological makeup differ in ways more than one.

For me, accepting who I was, was not a question, or a debate, as I had grown up rather assertive in my choices. For others, though, going against the very essence of what defines us (rather what we’ve been taught defines us) is, due to the lack of a better word, quite a dilemma.

We joked around when we grew up, calling boys gay just for the heck of it, calling best friends lesbians because somehow, it seemed like an insult. But then one day you realise, you **are** one of ‘them’. How do you accept that? How do you come to the understanding that what we, cruelly, called a joke is actually a beautiful way of life?

Choosing to accept yourself, and embracing the choice to be different, and not being embarrassed of it is difficult, but fullfilling.

How can I tell you how one should accept oneself?

How can I convince you that it’s okay to be you?

That it’s okay to you love not the ones in the other sex, but the ones in your own, or all of them for that matter.

That it’s okay to not care about what people think.

That it’s difficult, but still okay, if your parents and friends don’t accept you at first. Because they will eventually. That’s what makes them **your** **loved** ones. Their love **for you**.

That it’s beautiful, and okay, to embrace yourself as you are. No matter which community you belong to, or how you identify yourself, or what pronouns you prefer.

That it’s okay to not be okay. It’s okay to be conflicted about who you are. There are tons of people, experts, friends, counsellors, who can help you. That even if you suffer right now, this is not a state but a phase. All you need to do is ask.

That it’s okay to crave love, and affection, and, most of all, acceptance. We are after all social beings.

Most of all, it is okay. It is going to be okay. And you’re going to be perfectly fine. The people who you think you can’t live without today, are just going to be a distant memory, maybe not tomorrow, or next week, but one day, yes.

“I am <your name> and I am <your orientation or gender> and I am proud of myself. ”

For starters, though, you should try voicing it in the privacy of your bathroom, or maybe in the comfort of your blanket. And then maybe, penning this simple sentence down.

Look yourself in the eyes in the good old mirror and say it out loud. The day you’re able to say the whole thing, without flinching, without grimacing, and end with a grin, not some flimsy smile, but a full-fledged 36 watt batti, I’d say you’ve accepted yourself. And now, I’d say you’ve conquered yourself, and that, love, is the toughest battle. Loving yourself.

It is easy to live off the love of others, but it is satisfying to live off your own.