Letting Go of Family

April 12, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

Some years back I had to make a difficult decision. It was a choice to continue to endure the neglect of family especially around my sexual identity and health status or continue to accept the bread crumbs of love they chose to give me.

If you ask me I think there's no such thing as a perfect family. Some families present themselves as crystal vase with no cracks, but if you look closely enough you'll see the defects. My family, we not only were not made of crystal but we had cracks that would swallow a SUV. But still I still loved them because when it comes to family that's what you're supposed to do.

When I came out to my family I had the impression that everything was okay. It wasn't until I was in my early twenties and the only reason I did was because I had a sense they already knew. In fact my mother was the one who outed me as she asked me was there anything I wanted to tell her. I chose that moment to walk through the door and told her, 'yes I was gay'. She responded, "well as long as you don't try to steal my boyfriends" and my response, "I've seen your boyfriends so you don't have anything to worry about".

It was a joking moment but then a strange thing happened in my family. Just like the military my coming out turned into a 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'. So although they knew I was gay they just didn't want to hear the details of my life when it came to that. Yet I played by their rules because again... they're family.

Family is interesting because you let them do or say things to you that you wouldn't accept from anyone else. You let them treat you less than your worth and although you fight back, just like a puppy you make your way back.

I eventually started to have a one-way relationship with my family. It seemed like I had to call them to find out how they were doing. At this time I had HIV and I used to say to myself, "I can fall out in my apartment and wouldn't be discovered because my family doesn't take the time to reach out".

The time came when I said enough. I wasn't going to be treated that way. So I wrote each a individual hand letter and in it told them I was who I was and if they can't accept me then that's unfortunate for them as I'm always here for them and accept them as they are. I ended the letter by stating that if you want a relationship with me and all that I am, which included my sexuality and health status, then call me and let me know and we'll go from there. If you don't respond then I'll take that as an answer also.

Letters sent.

Two years went by and there was no response. I guess I got my answer. And my pride wouldn't allow me to continue to reach out. I wanted someone to reach out to me.

The worse thing was that through other relatives I would hear how they talked to each other, spend time together, continue being a family..less one.

I wish I could say I was hard and didn't care but there were tears. Holidays were the hardest, as I sat at a table of people who 'adopted' me. I truly appreciated their love, but seeing how they interacted like a family it was reminder of what I didn't have.

Soon the family must have remembered they had another son as I started to get calls. And I accepted them because I had never erased them out of my life. I just refused to not be me. And with the reconnection I made it clear that if a relationship is to happen, these are my terms. If you can't accept

me as a gay man with HIV then there would be no relationship. My life couldn’t be silent,
Letting go of family was the hardest period of my life but I feel that you have to set your limits, especially with family. Society already devalues you, family should uplift you. But during that absence I learned that family doesn’t mean it has to be someone of blood relationship, that we can create family from people who are open to embrace us. And if you’re in a situation where your family don’t accept you, as they say, If you love somebody, let them go, for if they return, they were always yours. And if they don’t, they never were.
I now can honestly say I have family.

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