

[BACKGROUND MUSIC IN]

JOEY: IT WAS FIRST A THOUGHT IN MY HEAD AROUND SEVENTH GRADE BECAUSE I STARTED TO REALIZE THAT I WOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO BOYS THAN I WOULD GIRLS.

MADDIE: YOU'RE LISTENING TO SOCIALLY AWKWARD. THIS WEEK'S EPISODE IS THE START OF A THREE-PART SERIES ABOUT INCLUSIVITY. SPECIFICALLY, HOW PEOPLE WHO ARE OFTEN MARGINALIZED COPE WITH A LACK OF INCLUSIVITY. EACH EPISODE WILL FOCUS ON A NEW PERSON, THIS WEEK'S EPISODE IS ABOUT,

JOEY: JOEY

[BACKGROUND MUSIC OUT]

JOEY: EIGHTH GRADE WAS BASICALLY ME, FIGHTING WITH MYSELF A LOT ABOUT, TRYING TO DISCOVER WHAT MY SEXUALITY WAS AND TRYING TO DISCOVER WHO I AM.

MADDIE: THREE YEARS AGO, CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR JOEY GUTIERREZ CAME OUT TO ONE OF HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS AS GAY.

JOEY: I WAS ACTUALLY VERY NERVOUS. I REMEMBER WE WERE AT HER HOUSE, SHE WAS PLAYING THE SIMS, AND THEN I WAS JUST TALKING TO HER. AND THEN I WAS LIKE, "I HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING," AND THEN SHE WAS JUST LIKE, "WHAT?" BECAUSE I CHOSE TO TELL HER FIRST BECAUSE SHE HAD COME OUT TO ME AS BISEXUAL. EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT SHE WAS BI I STILL FOUND IT VERY SCARY TO TELL SOMEONE BECAUSE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'M

TELLING SOMEONE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'M OPENING ABOUT SOMETHING SO PERSONAL TO SOMEONE. IT WAS REALLY FUNNY BECAUSE AFTER IT TOOK ME TEN MINUTES TO SAY IT SHE WAS LIKE, "OKAY". I KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE LIKE "THAT'S IT? OKAY." BUT HONESTLY, IT MADE ME JUST FEEL NORMAL.

MADDIE: WHILE SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ACCEPTING OF JOEY'S SEXUALITY, HE HAS RECEIVED TEASING FROM STUDENTS AT SCHOOL.

JOEY: I KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT AREN'T ACCEPTING, AT SCHOOL. SINCE FOURTH OR FIFTH GRADE, I WAS MADE FUN OF FOR BEING FEMININE, AND BEEN CALLED "GAY" AS AN INSULT. I DEFINITELY HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. MY UNCLE ONCE TOLD MY DAD TO SEND ME TO STRAIGHT CAMP, SO THAT WAS, SOMETHING.

[BACKGROUND MUSIC IN]

JOEY: RECENTLY I DON'T GET THAT MUCH INSULTS OR TEASING ABOUT IT BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW, IN THE PAST, I USED TO JUST KEEP MY HEAD DOWN AND STAY QUIET, BUT NOW I KNOW THAT IF SOMEONE WERE TO SAY THAT TO ME. NOT ONLY WOULD I FIGHT, BUT I KNOW A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD FIGHT WITH ME.

MADDIE: DATING WHILE BEING GAY IS A CHALLENGE FOR MANY BECAUSE OF A FEAR OF JUDGEMENT AND A LACK OF INCLUSIVITY. JOEY DESCRIBES THE WAYS IN WHICH DATING CAN BE DIFFICULT DEPENDING ON YOUR SEXUALITY.

JOEY: IT WOULD BE VERY LIKE, IT WOULD TAKE A LOT OF CONFIDENCE, THAT'S DEFINITELY TRUE, IT'D TAKE A LOT OF CONFIDENCE. BECAUSE YOU'D DEFINITELY GET A LOT OF STARES, WHISPERS. IN THE PAST I'VE WORN VERY FEMININE OUTFITS TO SCHOOL AND JUST FELT STARES AND STUFF. SO I FEEL LIKE IF I WOULD GET A LOT OF STARES WITH THAT, GOING TO THE POINT OF HOLDING HANDS WITH SOMEONE OF THE SAME GENDER, OR KISSING IN THE HALLWAY, WOULD GET A BUNCH OF STARES, A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WOULD TALK ABOUT IT PROBABLY. BECAUSE RIGHT NOW AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, I DON'T KNOW THAT MANY GAY COUPLES. YOU'D DEFINITELY NEED A LOT OF CONFIDENCE AND HAVE GOOD MENTAL HEALTH.

[BACKGROUND MUSIC IN]

JOEY: EVEN IF YOU DON'T THINK IT, THERE'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE SOMEONE THERE FOR YOU. THERE ARE A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WHO ARE PROBABLY IN YOUR PLACE, AND FEEL THE SAME WAY THAT YOU DO. AND HONESTLY, IT'S REALLY HARD, IT'S REALLY HARD, BUT ONCE YOU ACTUALLY COME OUT, I GUESS, IT GETS A LOT EASIER. I KNOW IT MAY FEEL LIKE IT'LL GET HARDER BUT THEN, PERSONALLY FOR ME, WHEN I CAME OUT, I JUST FELT A PRESSURE COME OFF OF MY CHEST. I JUST FELT HAPPIER. SO, YEAH, JUST KNOW THAT NO MATTER WHAT THERE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE PEOPLE THAT LOVE YOU, AND ACCEPT YOU, AND WILL BE THERE FOR YOU. AND YEAH.

MADDIE: THAT'S IT FOR THIS EPISODE OF SOCIALLY AWKWARD. FROM 91.3 WHJE, I'M MADDIE HARDEN.

[BACKGROUND MUSIC OUT]