The honest conversations.

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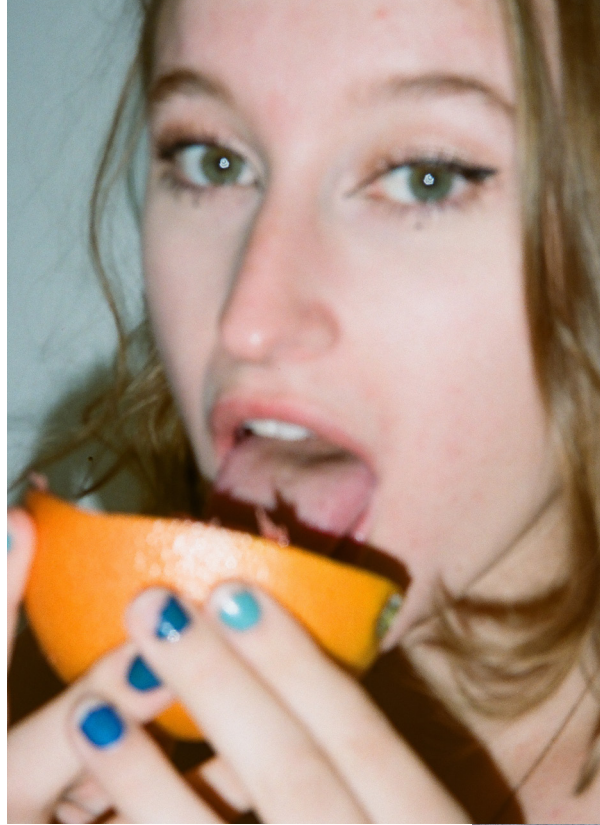Creating a safe space for people to talk, by actually starting the conversation.
Discussing all things sexuality, sensuality, identity and so on.

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable, but feeling empowered.
Everybody deserves to feel heard and understood,

Lian.

Sexuality means (self)love, feeling good, getting horny for yourself or with someone else and knowing what you like. I am convinced that having sex with someone or yourself, can help developing a better relationship with your body.
Embracing yourself, both literally as physically getting in touch with yourself.

I see it as a way of self exploration, becoming one with your body. Discovering your likes and dislikes, knowing your boundaries. To me it's very important to figure those things out.

There's actually been some kind of shift in my sexual desires and needs recently. Things I used to enjoy are becoming something I feel discomfort in.
Maybe this happened because I've developed a form of trauma.
But it could be growth as well, I am more able to reflect on my likes and dislikes. Ive realised I do like having sex, but somehow it has alwas felt like a sort of performance. I always felt some sort of pressure to make sure the other person felt good, and that had a lot of impact on my wellbeing.

But I recently realised I had to take a step back, and start from the beginning again. Figuring out what does feel good to me, if something makes me aroused and that some things dont have to end up in sex.
I went from a more intense sort of 'fucking' to the desire and need for intimacy and connection.

I'm not feeling my best right now. And I've noticed that even some non-sexual things make me feel very stressed. So I am very focussed on listening to myself and my body, and allowing myself to feel discomfort and stopping there. I ignored a lot of those signs, and now I need to take extra time to deal with them.

Talking about sex is very important, it is something you should feel allowed to enjoy. I was raised like that myself and it comforts me to be able to bring that kind of feeling into this world. And by talking about it, you will create a safe space that makes you feel heard.

If you try to hide things like that, you will develop a negative relationship around the whole subject. And by the lack of knowledge you take a higher risk of maybe eventually hurting yourself or someone else.

Was talking about this subject a taboo when you grew up?

My moms always taught me to have save sex and feel safe enough to always come to them with questions and problems. My moms are very open people, and that created a very honest space where I could feel understood and get educated.
They might have experienced some things themselves as well, so it is nice to know I could go to them.

Do you have any recollection of some of your first sexual experiences?

I remember I was nine or ten watching some soap show on tv, where a man and a woman were kissing each other with a lot of desire. And while sitting on the couch I noticed something contracting, what was probably my pelvic floor. So it was literally my body saying 'oh this is nice, we like this'
And I also have this clear memory of buying my first thong at Victoria's Secret, and that was somehow the beginning of me touching myself. The thong really caused some sort of a transition.

Did you ever struggle with your sexuality?

I identify as bisexual right now. But I remember being very close with a friend of mine, and actually being bullied about people assuimg I was gay because of my mothers. And I think I might've been interested in girls, but I sort of repressed that because of those reactions.
And I started realizing my interest about 3 years ago. But I also still notice somewhat of a struggle within my head. Having an actual relationship is still a bit too overwhelming for me right now, and I still need to cross that bridge somehow.

I am looking for someone that can make me feel at peace, feeling allowed to be myself as a whole and feel safe enough to be able to show that.

I've recently started prioritizing myself, after experiencing some difficult encounters, that made me realize that it was much needed to do that.

It feels nice to allow myself to create a space where I can be a priority, and rediscover myself at my own pace.
I am allowing myself to dislike certain things and ask for something that brings me pleasure.

What are you holding on to, that is no longer holding onto you?

I think I'm still holding onto an older version of me that has a lot of troubles with expressing her emotions. I want to keep growing, and I've accepted that I am currently in the growing phase.
Not quite there where I want to be, but I am sure I will get there eventually. I feel more able to let go, but something makes me hold on to some bad behaviours. And that makes me scared in a way, afraid to get into an intense relationship without being ready for it.

I'm trying, but it is difficult

I think I am able to give myself priority. I've had some bad experiences in the past, but they taught me a lot.

Now I am more familiar with my boundaries.

Is sensuality and sexuality a topic that already takes a part in your life right now?

I talk about it quite often with my friends. And I have a relationship right now, so we touch upon this subject quite often. But not in a way that it's part of my everyday conversation.

Opening the conversation about sexuality and sensuality is pretty easy for me, you could say I'm an open book. I feel comfortable with telling my friends about the different aspects of my sexual experiences.

Was talking about this subject a taboo when you grew up?

Talking about this was a pretty sensitive subject. I have a boyfriend and homosexuality hasn't always been very accepted in my family. That made things difficult sometimes, specifically the feeling that I had no one to go to. It made me feel very lonely.

I do think things would've been easier if I were straight. Some of my family members talk openly about their relationships and make some jokes about it, but this is always hetero normative.

What does sexuality and sensuality mean to you?

I've notice that within my community, sex is seen as more of a a fun activity. But it isn't like that for me. Of course it is fun, but it really means something special to me. Feeling connected is very important, I cannot have sex with someone without feeling that. So you can open yourself up to each other.

I've had sex with someone I didn't love, and I noticed that immediately. There was no fun, no desire, nothing at all, and it made me realize I wouldn't want to do that again.

I actually experienced a few things with a girl I knew for a very long time. And I remember thinking that it didn't feel so special at all.

It wasn't until I kissed a boy that I felt overwhelmed by excitement.

Did you ever struggle with your sexuality?

I realised I wasn't straight when I was about ten years old, and I identified as bisexual for about six years. And I discovered I actually only felt attracted to men when I was sixteen.

I sort of hid my sexuality, not suppressing it, but just never bringing it up with my parents. I one time mentioned I might like boys, and they didn't think anything weird of it actually.
I came out at eighteen, when I had my first boyfriend, and they were all accepting of it.

We used to live in a bit of an 'rich old money village' where you stand out pretty easily when you don't fit into the basic mold.
So a lot of people actually talked about my sexuality in school, which I didn't mind that much. But I do remember a teacher approaching me, asking if I did like boys. And maybe it was with all the right intentions, but it was very overwhelming.

I wasn't officially out at that moment, and made me feel more lonely actually.

Do you have any recollection of some of your first sexual experiences?

My first recollections of sexual experiences are actually only with women. I remember going to a friend's place when I was about 9, and we just danced.
But when I came home I told my parents that 'I felt a very weird thing happening in my pants'.

What are you holding onto, that's no longer holding on to you?

I think having sex for the first time.
It was amazing on one hand, because I was with a guy for the first time. But it was someone I didn't love.
Yet again I had this feeling of not understanding what the fuss was about. The time after that was with someone I actually loved at that time, and that did feel very good.

And I keep holding on to it because I sort of regret it, that I made myself vulnerable to that person. I have been able to let it go, but sometimes it just reappears.

It did get me to having a better relationship with sex, knowing what is important to me.
Prioritizing talking about it with your partner, because you can't have a relationship without communicating.

Eva.

Is sensuality and sexuality a topic that already takes a part in your life right now?

The subject plays a big role in my everyday life.
I talk a lot about it in therapy, and I'm actually planning on getting in touch with a sexologist.

It's actually necessary for me to talk about it both because of my past experiences, but because of my inexperience as well.
I look forward to growing, and I think I am ready for that. I've noticed it's a big source of insecurity, it carries a lot of trauma and I have always pushed this part of me aside. And I think opening up for positive experiences will have a healing effect on the lesser parts.

Is it easy for you to talk about this subject?

It's not really easy for me to talk about sex and everything, but in some indirect way I talk about it a lot. I make quite a lot of spicy jokes and innuendos.

And I have some friends who I can trust, some have similar experiences or interests. But aside from that it doesn't feel that easy for me. I feel like a burden to people quite quickly and maybe even feel a sense of shame.
Both because I feel very inexperienced, and also because of my difficult past experiences.

I do like talking about it when I feel safe enough, like right now, because I repressed it for so long.
But it keeps being some sort of a burden at the same time. When getting into specific details, I instantly feel that sense of shame and discomfort coming over me.

We couldn't talk about this subject at all when I grew up. My mom had a lot of difficult relationships, and the rest of my family was very closed off about it too.
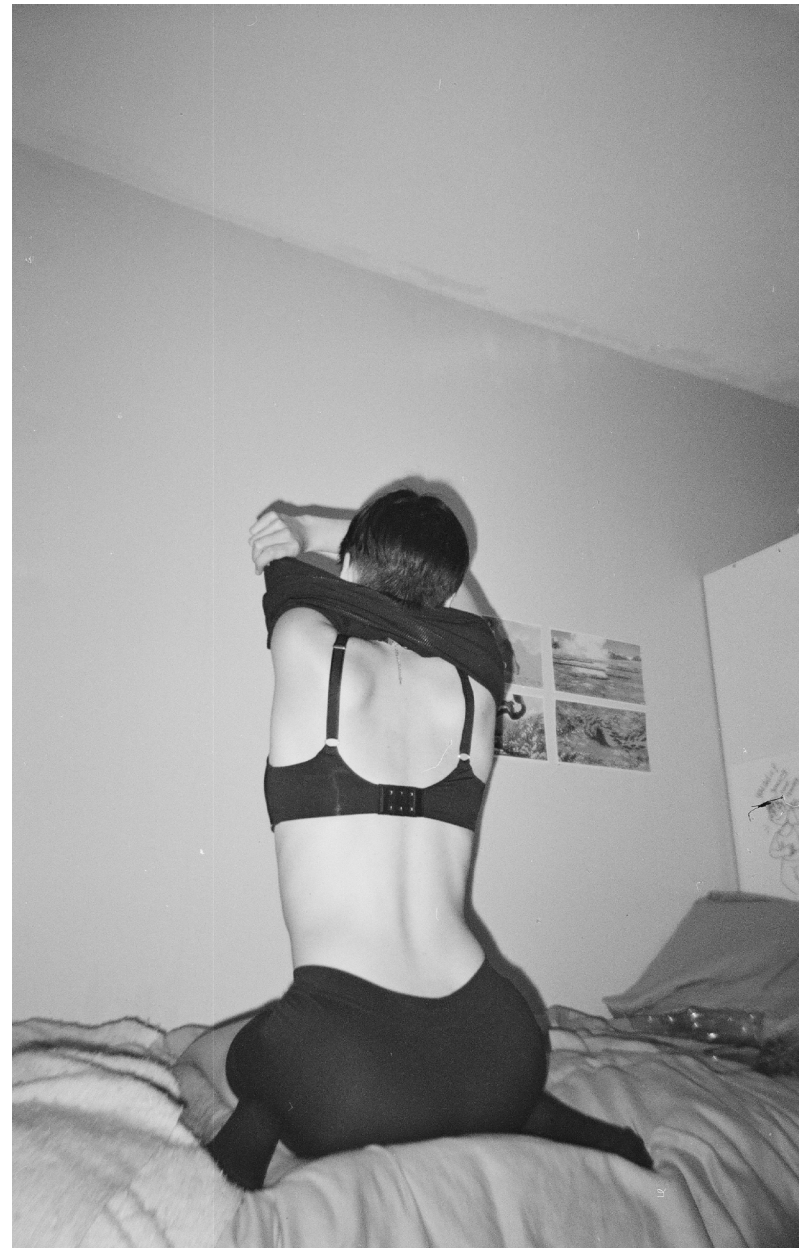
Did you ever struggle with your sexuality?

I've struggled with my sexuality quite badly.
I've been abused for quite a long time, and this
created such a strong post traumatic stress disorder,
that everything regarding sex made me panic en get
re-encounters. So I kind of cut that part out of my life
for a very long time.

I used to 'want' to be asexual, because the subject
made me freak out so badly. Until I got into therapy,
where I was eventually able to create space for normal
sexual thoughts or fantasies. So I was about seventeen
or eighteen years old when I realised I was gay and
not asexual at all.

It was difficult for me to accept, not the part that I was
attracted to women, but the fact that I was feeling
attracted to someone at all.
I still close off from people. Thinking about someone
kissing me, can make me feel very overwhelmed when
they are in my presence. While if I were thinking about
kissing them by myself, I could actually get excited
about that. But reality still makes it feel too intense
somehow.
I eventually really wanted a girlfriend, but that might
have made me push myself a bit too far.
Luckily nothing bad happened, but I certainly went too
fast.

I remember watching those stereotypical highschool movies. Where you had these bitchy pretty girls that maybe pushed another girl into a locker or something. That was very attractive to me.

I feel very ashamed for feeling this attraction, maybe out of some sort of protection, feeling like I "shouldn't" feel this way.

What are you holding on to, that's no longer holding on to you?

I think my traumas, even though those things aren't happening anymore, you keep holding on to it out of protection.

Eventually I need to be able to let it go, try to trust others again and realize you're not as big a burden as you thought you were.

But it's difficult.

Did you ever struggle with your gender identity?

Maybe that sort of developed over the past few years.
I have never been insecure about my body, and people always accepted me for the person that I am. Being somewhat more part of the boys, and I would like to be seen as tough and more masculine.

I don't feel uneasy in this body either, I don't mind having boobs and things, I quite like that actually.
But in a way I feel like there aren't any other people like me, and that I am somewhat expected to want to be a boy.
And a label like non-binary doesn't feel like it suits me.

At the same time I feel like, if I were to be transgender, that would only make me a bigger burden, becoming a "tiny ugly trans man".
I know a lot of the people around me are actually very open minded, and wouldn't care much at all. But I think after being abused for so long, I created this voice in my head that says I am a burden, a whore for attention even.

I'm thankful for the people willing to participate on this project, helping me to bring my message into the world,.

One conversation at a time.

S.l