

Dear 15 Year Old Me...

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Abstract

From Dear 15 year old me - how you can help. If you are a LGBT adult, write a letter to yourself, but write it to the person you were when you were 15 years old. If you could go back to the kid you were then, what would you say? What advice would you [...]

Article

From Dear 15 year old me - how you can help.

If you are a LGBT adult, write a letter to yourself, but write it to the person you were when you were 15 years old. If you could go back to the kid you were then, what would you say? What advice would you give for surviving this time?

Dear 15 year old me

I can do nothing for you, the 15 yr old girl that I was, silently sobbing in your bedroom. Back when you are, in 1973, I know your parents wouldn't understand. I know from here in 2012 (though you don't, and perhaps that's for the best) that if you let your secret out, the standard treatment in your time is electroshock therapy, sometimes even lobotomy, cutting out pieces of your brain, so best keep quiet.

I can do nothing for you. But I can do something for all the girls like you that exist in my time. Knowing me, knowing you, the girl I was, I think that will make you smile amidst your tears. It's how I sooth the hurt that you're feeling, easing the path of others.

And you know what? It will take a long time I'm afraid, but you'll live happily ever after too, as they will. We have a better understanding now. We have something called the Internet, linking all the computers in the world - and every home has at least one now - to share information. The surgery is far better, the knowledge of hormones more extensive. We can't give girls like you the ability to have babies, not yet, but that's coming too. Too late for you - for us - but perhaps not too late for them. It's no easier for other girls at 15 than it is for you, back in 1973, stuck with a male body that feels so terribly, fundamentally WRONG. But there is hope for them, as there doesn't appear to be for you, when you are. Well, after living for so many years, hoping even when there is no hope, you get to win anyway, to be yourself. You will learn what the word "happiness" means. It will be better than you can imagine, better than your wildest dreams. Against all the odds, you get to live happily ever after.

You have many years of hell in front of you. Far too many. But you get out anyway.

Today, in 2012, girls like you don't have to endure nearly so long. If they can endure, just for another thousand days, there will be help available for them. No child should have to endure what you are destined to endure, but you get through it. No child should have to endure even 1000 days of it,

nor 1000 seconds for that matter. They do have to though, at the moment. It's changing, getting better, and I think in my - in our - lifetime, we'll see an end to it. The issue will be recognised earlier, and social acceptance of the obvious treatment will become unremarkable. That day is not here yet, which is why we, you and I, have to help them.

You and I just have to show the girls of 2012 who are your age, that there is hope. That it does get better, and by the time they're 25, their lives will be not much different from other girls their age. That's not some impossible dream, not just a possibility, it's an inevitability, if they just hang on. Meanwhile, they must lay the foundations of their future life, do well at school, be ready to make a fantastic success of life, and not fall into the traps of drug abuse or throwing away a life that at the moment seems worthless. We must show them that they must plan ahead, for the better times to come for them.

They may end up marrying boys, and having a family together. Or marrying girls for that matter - we've come a long way in understanding sexuality since 1973, and same-sex partnerships, while unusual, aren't regarded as unthinkable as they are when you are.

Dear 15 year old me, feeling so isolated and alone, back in 1973 you don't know that there are many like you. Boys and girls, born with the wrong-sexed bodies. Yes, there are boys too, born with female anatomy, and it's just as horrid for them as it is for girls born with male anatomy. Now in 2012, we do know though, and are doing something about it. There's still plenty of bullying (and worse than bullying) in schools, and not just from other kids. That's getting better though too. The trouble is, that's little consolation for all the 15 year old boys and girls subject to it today in 2012, so we have to show them that others have made it, and they can too. That it gets better, and not in ten or twenty years, but in just a few. That they should be busy preparing for that day.

I hope I've made you smile, dear 15 year old me. You get to be quite a woman, you know? You use the pain you're feeling now as an energy, to help others just like you, transmuting it into compassion.

Writing letters like this one.

Love, and Hugs,

Zoe

p.s. I know you picked the name "Zoe" five years ago, and that you've never told anyone else. You won't for some time, but it fits you. If you recall your Ancient Greek, it means "Life".

cross-posted from A.E. Brain

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