



**channels**

- pop culture
- real life
- action
- Israel
- gametime

**services**

- chat
- message boards
- tell a friend

search JVibe

go

advanced search

help  
write us  
about us  
terms and  
conditions



## Feature Article

### I'm Telling You I'm Bisexual by Audrey Beth Stein

Mom's got some lame excuse for her call, something that easily could have waited until the rates changed and Dad got home. And after we have the usual introductory how-are-you conversation, she asks me to tell her more about Catrina\*.

I try. But it's hard. The facts are weird, and I can't just be like, "well, she's graduated, looking for waitressing jobs," and that's it, because it doesn't sound like Catrina has her shit together when I explain it that way.

So finally there's this long pause. I know there's no turning back without putting myself in this closet I say I'm not in.

"Well, I'm kinda interested in her," I say.

"Are you telling me you're a lesbian?" Mom asks. Her words are clear and distinct, as though she's in the front of a classroom.

"I'm telling you I'm bisexual."

It's not what I want to say, it's not true, *I am* bisexual but I was *telling* her about me being interested in Catrina, which *is* true although it's probably the understatement of the year. But Mom says, "Thank you for telling me. I love you." And what else can I say then but "I love you too."

I think the hard part is over but then Mom starts asking more questions, sort of hinting at "do you have any experience?" It's hard to figure out how to be honest without saying too much.

"I want to know about you," she says. "You're my daughter. I want to understand."

"Um," I say. "What exactly do you want to know?"

"Well," she asks, "Are you dating women? Have you dated women?"

I say defensively, "The only dates I've been on that you would call dates were with Jake."

"What happened with Jake?" she asks. "Is this why you called it off? Did he know you

issue 3

Feature  
Articles 

 The Rabbis'  
View on Sex

JVibrations  
Advice 

 Related  
Links

Test Your  
Sex IQ 

were bisexual?"

"No," I tell her. "I ended it because I was writing a novel that summer, you knew that."

"I thought there might have been another reason you hadn't mentioned."

"Nope."

Mom asks about the few other guys she knows about. I try to answer her questions without letting on that those are basically the only guys I've been involved with. Then she asks, "Is Catrina--experienced?"

I'm not exactly comfortable discussing Catrina's sexual history with my mom. "I don't think it's my place to answer that," I say instead.

Mom seems a little taken aback. She pauses, then asks if I'm sure about all this--*all this* meaning *being bisexual*--or still wondering. She says it sounds like I'm still wondering, or questioning. I tell her I'm not, I'm sure. I don't know if she believes that or not. "Are you happy?" she asks.

"Yes", I say. What am I supposed to say, that I'd rather not be having this conversation? That I'm uncomfortable with her questions? In self-defense I try to flip the tables on her. "Are you happy?" I ask.

She's kind of obviously thrown by the question. "I'm happy if you're happy," she says carefully.

My dad gets home at this point and picks up the phone, and we pause the conversation long enough to say hi, and then somehow Mom convinces Dad to get off the phone and go in another room until she's done, "No, nothing's wrong, we were just in the middle of a mother-daughter conversation."

Dad says he'll talk to me later and hangs up, and then the conversation gets more awkward. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be saying but kind of feel like I'm not allowed to change the subject.

Mom wants to know how long I've known. I'm still not sure of the answer to that question. What I believe intellectually about searching for a soulmate rather than a gender is something I'm sure I would have agreed with at age seventeen or even age five if anyone asked. I used to hide in my closet as a kid with a flashlight and a deck of cards I found which had a different naked woman on each card, but that's probably best attributed to basic pre-adolescent curiosity, just like the Chippendales cards with bare-chested male dancers I bought at the mall a few years later. What am I supposed to say to Mom? I wish I could try to flip the tables again but it feels too intrusive to ask these kinds of questions about Mom and Dad. Maybe I'm scared to find out some of the answers.

Mom wants to know who else knows, am I *out*? "Out is relative," I tell her. I know she'll be hurt if she finds out how many random people know. She asks if Sasha--my best friend since childhood--and Matthew--a college friend who's gay--both know. They do. I tell her she should talk to her friend Rhonda, that I talked to Rhonda last night. She asks, "Is it okay if I tell people?" I say it's fine with me once Dad is comfortable with it.

Apparently Mom has already told her suspicions to Dad. Dad has brushed them off. He thinks Mom is making this up. Mom thinks I need to tell Dad. I don't think I'm quite ready for that.

"Can I do it next week, when I'm at Catrina's?" I ask.

"I don't think so," she says. "I think he'll be hurt if you wait that long. Can I put him on the phone?"

"No," I say. "You can tell him," I say.

"He won't believe me." She says he needs to hear the words *Dad, I am bisexual* coming from my mouth. And he needs to hear them soon.

"What's he going to say?" I ask.

"Audrey, you're the pride and joy of his life." Mom pauses. "It's not like you're telling him you just won a scholarship, but I think you're worrying unnecessarily."

We go back and forth and finally agree that she will tell him first, and that I will call in the next forty-eight hours to tell him myself. Before we hang up she asks again if she can put him on the phone. I say no. I'm not ready. I need the guts.

**\* Names have been changed to protect anonymity.**

**Want to discuss this article? Click [here to enter](#) the message boards.**



Audrey Beth Stein is now *out* to Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa, her co-workers, her housemates, everyone reading [JVibe.com](#), anyone who's checked out the contributors page of the [Bisexual Resource Guide](#), some straight chick she kissed in a bar once, and anyone with decent gaydar. She spends her days at Jewish Family & Life! designing stuff like the JVibrations logo and [JFLbooks.com](#). "I'm Telling You I'm Bisexual" is an excerpt from her as-yet-unpublished memoir *Map*, which--yes--gives the dirt on what happened with Catrina. For more information about *Map* and about Audrey's first book of short stories (due out this summer), join her mailing list by emailing [abstein@stwing.org](mailto:abstein@stwing.org), or check out her web site at [audreybethstein.com](http://audreybethstein.com).