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that it was bad," he said. "They had never said it was bad, but then again they never said anything. My parents' reaction is typical. They still don't accept me. They don't accept the relationship between me and my lover. (They) saw my coming out as the worst thing. I have a brother with mental illness and I was considered worse than that. I feel real anger about that whole (coming out) experience. However, I use that anger as

fuel for living now."
Shaffer's father said he would spend any amount of money to get him "changed back."

"The thing is, I was never straight," Shaffer said.

Shaffer advised other gay men who are coming out to wait until they have the resources to come out.

"If you don't have the resources to come out, avoid the subject. When you do have the opportunity to come out, do come out. Otherwise, the regret will be like a millstone that holds your head to the ground. Remember that when you come out you are telling the truth."

Thompson said her parents never talked about homosexuals. And because she had never heard the term "bisexual," she didn't know it described her. After talking with a friend who was bisexual, Thompson said her feelings began to make a lot

more sense.

Thompson said she told her parents she was bisexual, and they are still trying to accept the news.

"My mom still thinks I'm going through a phase, and my dad just kind of ignores it," Thompson said. "I came out to my closest friends. I just didn't think it would be a good idea to come out in high school."

Thompson said she thinks it is "a little bit easier" for her to come out than for someone who is gay or lesbian.

"Straight guys are more ac-cepting of it," she said. "Nine out of 10 guys are turned on by lesbian sex. I do, however, have a hard time relating to lesbian women. I have always loved people in general. (Lesbians) think that because you associate with men, you're just as bad as straight women. They think that my ideas aren't as good as their ideas because I'm not a 'full-blooded' lesbian."

Thompson said she wants support from lesbians and wishes there wasn't a division between the two groups.

Overall, Thompson said she hasn't received too much criticism about her bisexual status.

She said that once she wore an "I like women" button to test people's reactions but didn't get much flack.

Thompson said coming out is something you have to be ready for, and she doesn't believe it's right for people to pressure others to come out.

Ross, unlike Shaffer and

Thompson, was never faced with the task of telling her parents about her sexual orientation. Her mom came to her and asked if she was a lesbian. Ross said because she wasn't really interested in guys and was reading a book about a gay man's experiences, her mother "just put two and two togeth-

"I was real uncomfortable and didn't want to talk to my mom about it," Ross said.
"Both my parents have not acted out of hostility or anger. They've been willing to find a way to be OK with it.

Ross said she didn't discuss it for about three or four years, but it wasn't an issue because she wasn't dating anyway. Ross said one's sexual orien-

tation is a personal thing, but, at the same time, is an important piece of social information.

"It affects how people perceive you. The conclusions they draw about you, who you are. And I'm not saying that's a bad thing. It's just surprising for someone who doesn't know because it changes their whole view of you."

Ross said coming out can be a selective process in which the people that are closest to her are the ones who she feels she must be honest with.

"I don't think lesbians, gays or bisexuals are obligated to come out to everyone. For example, with acquaintances or in a working situation it isn't necessary to talk of your sexual orientation."



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