

CASE STORY: Christos, 17 'borrowed father's car, 'escape', severe accident'

Parents: Worry re. going out, where he is
who he's with, what MONEY he takes, how
he uses it

Is he safe?

Coming out of the closet

- Coming out of the closet is not an event.. It is a process... A 'translation of the world into a different language'
- It means new sets of relationships in all aspects of your life, and new 'lenses' for viewing these
- It means different internal calibration: a determination not to be oppressed, abused, to set a value on oneself which is harder to maintain than for straight guys

Christos assertion about his `joining gay world`

- I can't be watched all the time, I can be out without having sex
- I use `their` (parents; escort companions) credit cards to get onto chat lines; I can chat `anywhere in the world': `be anybody'
- I can drink with anybody
- ISSUE; whose body, whose money, whose IDENTITY

Family meeting'

- What does having your parents here free you to talk about together?

- Christos

“the front I have to put up now I am `out’. I hate aspects of my life to be honest, what I am doing, escorting, chatting, exploiting and manipulating is not a career, its something I do to have fun now”

Will he get a `proper' job?

- PARENTS

- `At his age we knew exactly what we wanted to do

He could do jobs at home if he wants to earn money:

- Christos

- `I want to be an individual; to do what I do because I can.'

Reframing Christos' image in the family: from 'sex worker' to....?

- Christos: I'm good looking, I've got charm; I **see good in people**
- Issue of **trust: lost in family and lost inside Christos**
- He is 'insulted' at their fear that he is prostituting himself (goes out for two nights, comes back with several hundred dollars)
- 'I don't suck dick for money'
- 'the more safety nets I have got the better: money is better than emotional relationships'

Over next four months :with family meetings every three weeks

- Still goes away for nights at the weekend but always returns to `home`
- Tries to stay within one relationship (at a time..but longer at a time)
- Has a local `gay sports` group (ie being `gay` in a non- sexualised setting)

Ongoing preoccupation: what is love

“Is there really ‘love’ in the world or do people only ‘perform’ love”

‘Out there its not in the same world: **parental love is always there and you can’t really escape it:** it reaches so far beyond what you feel in relationships, they come and go..’ ‘so many people get married,... they get divorced,... with parent’s its like a contract that can’t be broken. .stronger and bigger

Father's response

- ` you made a nice speech that we could clap... I don't believe you feel like that
- **Gill:** `it's hard to try out new ideas in this family`
- **Christos:** `I try and invite them in with stories as a way of trying out ideas`
- **Father:** yes, you try and invite us into something rather **evil**
- **Gill** invites them to tell their own stories about being 18 years old.

Parent's stories

- **Mother:** her father killed himself, her mother said she should never tell anyone
- She fears Christos may do the same

- **Father:** Father rowed with own father about choice of career: never spoke again: feels he never reconciled or knew his own father as an adult

Gill and Christos: stories and feared 'repeat outcomes'

Gill 'Can you see the difference between 'telling many stories' (with possible different outcomes) and of how telling a story in this family is deeply connected with a dreadful feared outcome, death or alienation'

- **Christos** 'it makes much more sense now my view..' like 'it's a story; get over it' to their view, 'well, it might happen'

Christos on suicide in response to mother's fear

- ` I went to a bridge once (where many people have thrown themselves into the Thames River) and contemplated whether to throw myself off for about an hour, but hey...that's past. It's part of what I am now, I don't regret it. I'm stronger now' (take into account adolescent developmental capacity)

Challenging father's depression'

Christos starts a 'sales' training and does well, but father is not approving. 'mum tries to make ten minutes a day, but I would like dad to come forward and say... 'well done...how's it going.'

- 'Get off your fatherly backside and DO something...by the end of my training money will be **coming out of my own bank account**'

Success at work and small steps

- Christos passed highest out of his training course.
- Father said `well that doesn't mean much'...`it's doing well without doing anything important'
- (repetition of his experience with his own father who had sent him away for not doing the job he wanted him to do')
- Gill sent them away to do something together without mother.
- They manage to meet as a family without Gill present

“We've come a long way... how much further do we need to go between us”

Setting tasks to carry on `maturing` in new identity

- Christos and father to do something together without mother once a week
- Mother and father to go away together without Christos for a week
- Mother and father to trust Christos to stay in the house on his own while they are away
- Focus on **household rules** `people who live in this house do A,B,C`
- Separating `normal` parental anxiety about a child leaving home from their `extreme anxiety` about pathology

New boyfriend: family adaptations

- **Mother:**...`he (friend Don) stays in his room in his bed. I find it hard that if I say `yes' I am contributing to a risk...and if I do not I am also contributing to a risk'
- **Father:** I'm not really taking a decision...:I am being forced into it
- ALSO they are getting on better. They interfere less in each other's lives...parents worry less about harm and self harm in Christos life

From Lion to cub

- I can be a lion when I'm out and about, but with Don I can just be a little cub
- Potential safety in this relationship

DISCUSS

- Try taking a position as mother, father or Christos in your discussion with your neighbour and see how your thinking changes
- FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW what would you like to ask each other now
- WHAT DOES THIS BRING UP FOR YOU PERSONALLY