

SASH REAL STORIES

K's story

At the time that my partner Brian took his life, I had just taken a period of time away from work to finish a PhD, so I was six months into doing that.

At the time it happened I was mentally well enough to function, but after it happened, and since then, I've had significant mental illness, trauma, I became very isolated because I was just so unwell. I haven't really recovered my circle of friends to the extent that I had prior.

I am someone who is non-binary, my pronouns are she and they, and I am also bi. The non-binary thing was quite a bit more recent. Brian was also bi but wasn't out to his family.

When it came to the funeral, not only did we have the instruction that we couldn't tell anyone attending the funeral, we couldn't speak about it that Brian had actually killed himself, but of course we couldn't talk about him being bisexual as well.

When it comes to being able to get support and speak open and honestly, it has been a challenge. With the Support After Suicide counsellor that I saw and am seeing again now, she knows and has known the entire time that I'm bi and that Brian was also. There's been no issue when it came to speaking to the counsellor and I'm very grateful to have had that support.

I actually had someone who became a partner of mine, they actually started coming around and just visiting me. I'm polyamorous and they have partners who they take care of in their home that they live with, so they have a lot of experience with mental health.

That was really important for me in terms of getting support, but I found myself struggling about whether I wanted to go along to the peer support type group. There was a couple of reasons for that and one of them was the fact that I have worked in suicide prevention, so I felt myself being worried about taking on, without meaning to, the counselling kind of role.

But I also wonder whether I would have gone along if I knew that it was actually going to be a safer space for people who are from our communities. The issue has always been, like, I have a space where I can be part of those communities, but I never felt like I could bring in that conversation about my partner killing himself.

It's only very recently, now that I feel like I'm actually strong enough to start engaging in advisory groups and so on, that I've been able to talk about both of these things. I've realised it's super important. It's just like, you don't have to worry, you can just be your authentic self.

Hearing other people's experiences, whilst it's hard because this is hard stuff, it just leaves me feeling like I'm not alone.

In regard to the SASH space, I think it's going to be great for people who just want to drop in somewhere and read other people's stories, or hear other people's stories and have those discussions.

K, she/they