

Karmel's story

Name: Karmel

Age: 17

Hobbies: fashion, shopping, beauty, drama, street dance

Karmel is the popular girl. No one suspects she might be gay and pressure from her parents makes it hard for Karmel to admit to herself – let alone to anyone else – that she is a lesbian. Despite trying to prove to herself that she is “normal”, Karmel finds support at a local youth group and in Lee, and learns that she's not alone.



“At least she didn't come out with ‘I'm gay’ or something like that”

“Every time they say ‘that's so gay’... they're talking about me”

Karmel's story addresses the issues of **coming out**, as well as the **impact of homophobic language**.

The PSHE national curriculum at **Key Stage 3** should include discussion of ‘a wide range of relationships, such as boy/girl [and] same sex...’ as well as prejudice, bullying and discrimination. Use Karmel's story during lesson time to discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think Karmel hasn't told her friends and family she's a lesbian?
- Why does Karmel get upset about people saying “that's so gay”?
- Does language hurt? Is “gay” just a word?
- What do you think of Karmel's parents? How do you think her dad's attitude towards gay people affects Karmel and her relationship with them?
- Were you surprised to find out that Karmel is a lesbian? Why? Why do we assume that lesbians look a certain way? Does the media stereotype lesbians?
- Why do you think Karmel went on a date with Tyler? Do you think maybe she is bisexual?
- Do we feel under pressure to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Why do you think people often find it hard to tell their friends and family that they're gay? Could we tell people in this school? Is it OK to say “that's so gay” here?
- Why do gay people feel a need to “come out”? Why don't heterosexual people “come out”? Do we always assume people are straight?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Stonewall's Challenging Homophobic Language Education Guide provides information for schools on why and how to address the use of phrases such as “you're so gay” and “that's so gay”.

www.stonewall.org.uk/resources

Channel 4's Gay to Z series has information about real-life coming out experiences.

Visit www.channel4.com/programmes/gay-to-z for more information.