

Love Yourself, Live Yourself

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Hello. Are you living your life in the way you want? Are you happy with your life? My name is Karin Kawabe. I'm 19 years old, I'm not yet an adult, but also not a child.

I have been proud of my femininity since I was born. When I was a little child, I used to admire princesses, and loved pink and shiny things. I still love cute, fluffy, glittering things. However, there were also aspects of femininity that I was not so keen on as a child. Gender roles were often confusing. Many adults would say something like, "Be gentle, because you're a girl!" A boy who was a cry baby would be told like this, "Don't cry, you are a boy!" As a child, little me wondered why so many mothers talked that way, why girls shouldn't climb trees, and why boys shouldn't cry? They were all just children.

There are 7.8 billion people in the world. There must be a girl who likes tree climbing, or a boy who is sensitive, because we have so many people, right? Together, we have 7.8 billion lives to live, and the same number of personalities. It is not necessary for each personality to be categorized by gender.

We can say the same thing about love. Early in my life, my grandmother said to me, "My, what a handsome guy you will get married with?" When I heard it, I was so excited at the prospect of my future prince, because I used to admire princesses. Now, I am an adolescent girl. I have a boyfriend, and I have been in relationships with a few boys. But once, I fell in love with a girl. At that time, I wondered "If I say that I would like to share my life with a girl, how would my grandmother feel?"

The first time I started thinking about homosexuality, I was 13 years old. I was watching an American drama, and the man in the drama kissed another man. The two men looked so happy, and I felt purely that that love was beautiful. However, in those days in school, everyone said nasty things to the boys who were very close. I realized that they didn't think very well of homosexuality which I felt was beautiful.

After that, I came to read articles and watch movies or dramas about LGBTQ+. How much do you know about LGBTQ+? LGBTQ+ is named from the first letters of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning. A Bisexual person is someone who loves both males and females. A Transgender person is someone whose gender identity doesn't fit with their body gender. Queer is the general term for sexual minorities. And, Questioning refers to a person who doesn't have the answer for their gender identity. Gender identity is the gender that you feel to be a part of. As you can see, there is not just one type of gender and not only one form of love.

It is natural that we have so many types of gender and love. And love is so dear in any type. However, people who think like me are in the minority in modern society. Do you know why? I think it's because many people still don't know much about LGBTQ+. Humankind are an animal that can't accept what they don't know or which is not common. Therefore, I want as many people as possible to know and think about LGBTQ+. People like me who support sexual minorities are called "Allies". I will be so

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glad to know if even one person becomes an Ally through listening to my presentation.

In the end, dear Queer person, who is worried about your gender, or who you should like: For now, there may be few who accept you. But, there must be many people who support you like me. The person who can love you the most is you. Love yourself a lot. Live as yourself with confidence. Lots and lots and lots of love from me to as many Queer as possible.

Thank you.