

LGBTQ+ REAL EXPERIENCES

I DIDN'T PUT THE PHOTO ON MY DESK

A small frame carrying years of self-protection

REAL EXPERIENCE • SHARED ANONYMOUSLY



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Everyone in the office had photos of their families.

Children.

Partners.

Holidays.

Dogs.

I had an empty desk.

When someone asked why I didn't have any pictures, I'd smile and say, "I'm just not sentimental."

The truth was, I had dozens of photos of my partner that I loved.

I just couldn't bring myself to put one where everyone could see it.

Nobody had told me not to.

Nobody had made me feel unwelcome.

But for years I'd learned to keep that part of my life private. It felt safer not to invite questions or attention.

One evening my partner asked, "Why don't you ever bring one of us into work?"

I didn't have an answer.

The following week, I put a small photo frame on my desk.

I spent the whole morning wondering if anyone would say something.

Nobody did.

One colleague smiled and said, "That's a lovely picture."

That was it.

I'd spent years preparing myself for rejection that never came.

Now, every time I see that photo, it reminds me of something much bigger than a picture.

It reminds me that I don't have to keep hiding the people I love.

Reflection

Internalised stigma isn't always about big decisions. Sometimes it's found in the small choices we make every day to stay unnoticed. Those quiet acts of hiding can continue long after they are no longer needed.

About This Real Experience

This is a real person's lived experience, shared anonymously. It was created collaboratively: the contributor spoke openly about their thoughts and feelings, and Maggie Learoyd wrote the experience in their own words. The contributor wanted their experience to be heard and understood, but has chosen not to be named.