

LGBTQ+ REAL EXPERIENCES

I LAUGHED AT THE JOKE

Understanding a response learned for survival

REAL EXPERIENCE • SHARED ANONYMOUSLY



I Laughed at the Joke

Understanding a response learned for survival

At work, someone made a joke about a gay man on television.

Everyone laughed.

So did I.

Not because it was funny.

Because I didn't want anyone looking at me.

On the outside, it probably looked like I was joining in.

Inside, I felt sick.

The rest of the day I kept thinking, "Why didn't I say something?"

The answer wasn't that I agreed with the joke.

It was that, growing up, I learned it was safer to laugh than to become the target.

At school, if someone was called gay, everyone joined in. If you stayed quiet, people started wondering why.

So I laughed.

I laughed to fit in.

I laughed to protect myself.

Years later, I was still doing it without even thinking.

It took me a long time to realise that this wasn't who I was—it was something I'd learned to survive.

Now, if something like that happens, I don't always have the perfect response.

Sometimes I simply don't laugh.

Sometimes I change the subject.

Sometimes I quietly say, "I don't think that's very funny."

I'm still learning.

But every time I stop pretending to agree with something that hurts me, I feel a little more like myself.

Reflection

Internalised stigma doesn't always sound like self-hatred. Sometimes it sounds like laughing along, staying silent or pretending something doesn't bother you because that's how you learned to stay safe. Healing often begins when you realise you no longer have to do that.

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.