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I Took My Trans Daughter To Florida On Vacation. Now I'm Not Sure If We'll Ever Go Back.

"Was I willingly dragging my daughter into the line of fire?... Would my daughter not only **be** safe, but **feel** safe, when we landed?"



By **Kate Brookes**

Jun 7, 2023, 08:34 AM EDT



"Was I willingly dragging my daughter into the line of fire?" the author writes. DOBRILA VIGNJEVIC VIA GETTY IMAGES

"Mommy, I'm so excited," my daughter Gabby exclaimed as we rolled our bags out of our building and headed toward our ride.

"When I get older, I definitely want a place in Miami," she told me.

"You mean in addition to your apartment in the city and your house on Long Island?" I asked with a smile.

"Exactly."

She laughed as we loaded our bags into the trunk and directed our driver to our friends' apartment. This other mother and her daughter were among the nine pairs gathering in Florida to support one of Gabby's bunkmates dancing in a regional production of "The Nutcracker."

While Gabby never officially took dance lessons, she'd recently gone through a ballet phase, mostly consisting of twirling in our living room for what seemed like hours. Her long legs and arms looked surprisingly elegant, especially for a novice. My 14-year-old daughter considered classes at the local studio, but her packed schedule and visibly packed leotard both served as deterrents. At this stage in her development, Gabby's body still betrays her gender identity, which makes it difficult for her to dress like the other girl ballerinas.

As we approached the airport, I worried I was betraying my daughter by spending time and money in a state that rejects who she is. It was our first trip to Florida since [Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the "Don't Say Gay \(or Trans\)" law in March 2022](#). Though I knew Gabby and her friends were more concerned with getting a tan than discussing a school lesson plan, I still felt conflicted.

Was I willingly dragging my daughter into the line of fire? Did DeSantis (and those who elected him) deserve our tourism dollars? And more importantly, would my daughter not only *be* safe, but *feel* safe, when we landed? I ultimately decided she deserved the opportunity to hang with the girls who love, accept and support her for the fun, fabulous, fierce girl that she is.

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Just a few short months after our trip, [Equality Florida](#) and the [NAACP](#) warned people against moving to or even *visiting* Florida because of the state's anti-LGBTQ+ laws, restrictions on access to reproductive health care, repeal of gun safety laws and racial prejudice. The U.S. State Department routinely adds foreign locations to [its "Do Not Travel" list](#) citing land mines, terrorism and kidnapping concerns. But this was Florida — home to Mickey and Minnie Mouse and thousands of Bubbes and Zaydes anxiously awaiting visits from their grandkids, not to mention millions of law-abiding, equal-rights-supporting, intelligent human beings caught in the crossfire of misguided conservatives waging a culture war designed to divide.

After issuing its travel advisory, Equality Florida Executive Director Nadine Smith [said in a statement](#), "As an organization that has spent decades working to improve Florida's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive place to live, work and visit, it is with great sadness that we must respond to those asking if it is safe to travel to Florida or remain in the state as the laws strip away basic rights and freedoms. ... We understand everyone must weigh the risks and decide what is best for their safety, but whether you stay away, leave, or remain we ask that you join us in countering these relentless attacks."

Translation: Florida is *not* safe for my daughter or kids like her. Period.

DeSantis also [recently signed a bill banning gender-affirming care for trans youth](#). That means the puberty blockers Gabby's been taking for years — the ones whose use are supported by the American Medical Association and studies have shown [reduce depression and suicidality in trans kids](#) — are now outlawed in Florida. Ditto for the hormones that are helping my daughter develop not only breasts and curves but also a sense of confidence and belonging. Thankfully, her friend danced at the Ziff Opera House and not in the auditorium of the local high school, because Gabby could now face criminal charges for entering the girls' bathroom in public schools across Florida, not to mention state and federal buildings. Which raises the question: Where does DeSantis suggest my daughter pee? I'm guessing the governor would say it wasn't safe for any of these 14-year-old girls to use the guys' restroom, but that's exactly what he's demanding — and legislating — my daughter do.

Sadly, Florida is just [one of 49 states that have introduced over 555 anti-trans bills in 2023 alone](#). According to the Trans Legislation Tracker, on the day this piece was written in late May, 78 of these bills have passed and 373 remain active. We are literally under siege.

Though this is a national crisis for trans people and the people who love them, it's Florida garnering the most headlines. But you know what we aren't seeing on the news? A friend from Tampa called me crying a few weeks ago after the doctor treating her trans daughter said he could no longer provide her care. Thankfully, my daughter's New York City-based endocrinologist was happy to accept her as a patient, but what about trans youth in



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Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah and West Virginia — states that have also banned gender-affirming care for kids? What if their parents can't afford to fly them to New York or another state for their treatment? Will these 17 states soon appear alongside the Sunshine State on an updated "Do Not Travel" list?

Neither my daughter nor any of her TikTok-loving, clothes-swapping, Sephora-shopping teen friends mentioned the then-pending legislation when hanging at the pool, staying up all night, or hugging their favorite ballerina following her regional dance debut. I also don't think Gabby felt threatened in any way during our three-day getaway, though according to a [2021 study by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law](#), she's four times more likely to be the victim of violence than her cisgender peers no matter where she is simply because of her gender identity. Still, we're told the laws being passed in states like Florida are designed to protect people *from* my daughter, not the other way around. It's not only ironic but also heartbreaking. My baby girl deserves better. So do the over [300,000 other 13- to 17-year-old trans teens](#) in our country.

"Mommy, I had the best time this weekend," Gabby told me as our car dropped us at home on the Sunday night after our trip. "I can't wait to go back!"

I nodded but said nothing. I knew we'd ultimately need to design and discuss a "Do Not Travel" list and other safety measures that fit our family's sensibilities. That's the reality of having a trans child in this country right now. But at that moment, I didn't want to disturb the high my daughter was experiencing from spending the weekend just being a typical teenage girl on vacation with her friends.

"You know what, though?" Gabby continued. "I don't think I want a place in Miami anymore."

"Why the change of heart?" I asked.

"Well, I've been doing some research," she explained, "and I think Malibu is more my vibe."



GO TO HOMEPAGE



[year](#), and the State Department, LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, and the NAACP aren't suggesting we steer clear of the Golden State. Besides, I'll take earthquakes over terrorists any day.

Note: Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals in this essay.

Kate Brookes is the author of "Transister: Raising Twins in a Gender-Bending World" (She Writes Press, Aug. 8, 2023). She is an award-winning TV reporter/anchor turned producer/filmmaker who has interviewed everyone from Beyonce to the late Barbara Walters, field-produced for The Discovery Channel, written for Today.com, and emceed galas, live events, and webcasts for nonprofits and Fortune 500 companies. An activist since her teenage years, Kate has devoted countless hours to the causes she supports, including mental health, housing justice, and anti-gun legislation. But it wasn't until realizing she'd completely botched the birth announcement for her twins that she became active in LGBTQ+ causes. Kate lives with her husband and rock star children in New York City. Find out more about her at TransisterMom.com.

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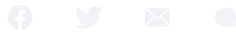


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I Appeared To Be An Incredibly Supportive Mom But I Was Secretly Failing My Trans Son

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Kate Brookes
Guest Writer

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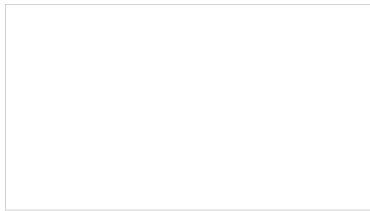
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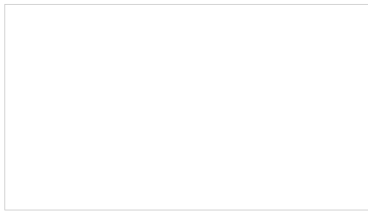
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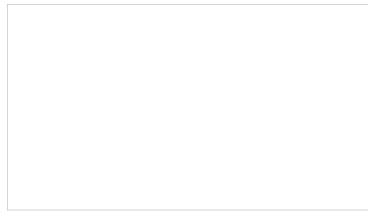
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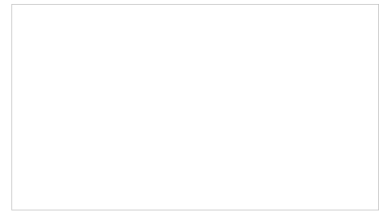
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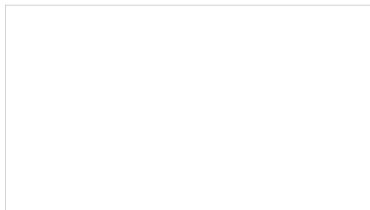


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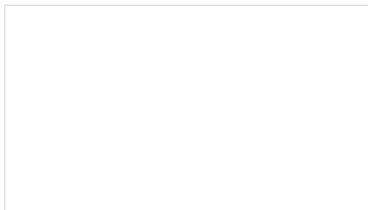


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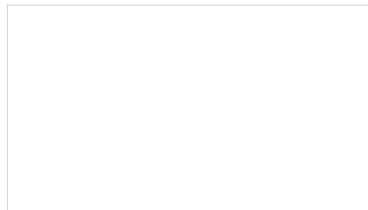
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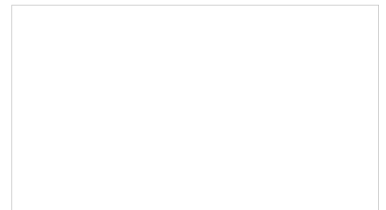
My Girlfriend And I Went To A Sex Party. In The Middle Of An Orgy, I Realized I'm Not Straight.



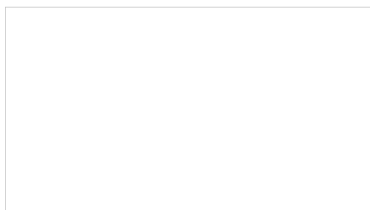
When My 8-Year-Old Said These 5 Horrifying Words, I Had To Change Everything About My Parenting



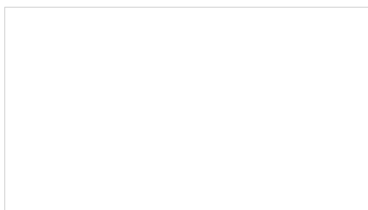
I Was The First Latina On 'Sesame Street.' Now I Have My Own Ideas About Bringing Representation To TV.



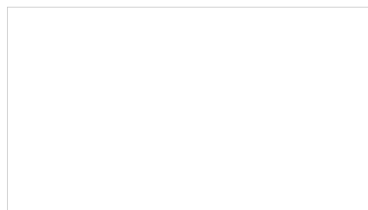
I Was A Queer Pastor For 15 Years. Then The Death Threats Began.



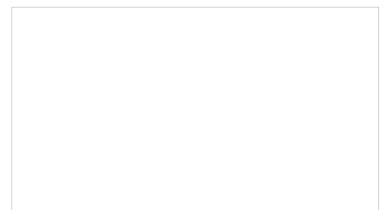
I've Had 2 Near-Death Experiences. Here's What I Saw Before I Came



I'm Part Of The 'Graduating Class Of'



I'm An Undocumented College Student. No Matter How Hard I Work,



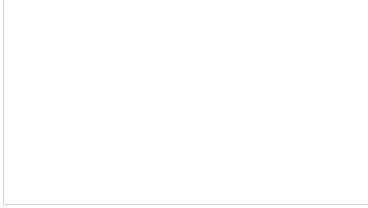
I Ventured Into An Underground Fight Club. I'm Still Conflicted About What

Back To Life.

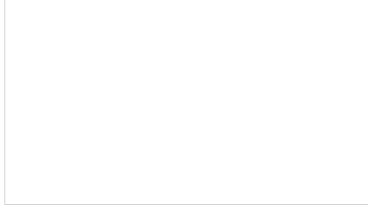
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There's 1 Reality I Can't Escape.

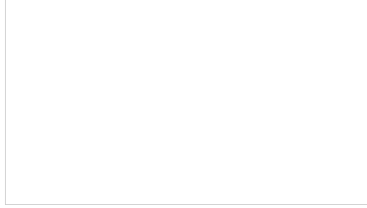
Happened That Day.



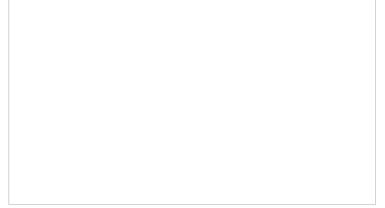
I Had Just Started Dating A 'Boob Man.' Then Something Devastating Happened.



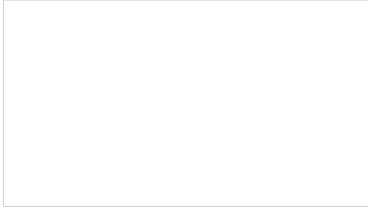
After Years Of Infertility, I Got Pregnant At 46. I Had No Idea That Would Be The Easiest Part.



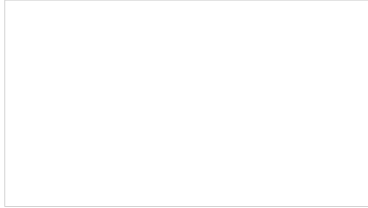
My Daughter Wasn't Expected To Live Past 31. A New Drug Saved Her — But There's 1 Big Catch.



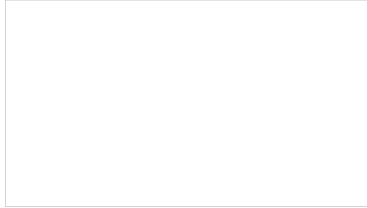
I Couldn't Manage My Messy Life. Then I Started Stealing My 9-Year-Old's Ritalin.



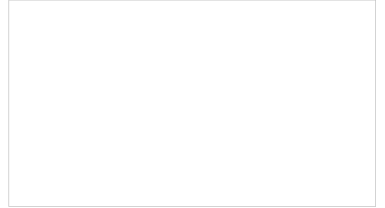
Most People Don't Need Pacemakers Until Retirement Age. I Had To Get One At 26.



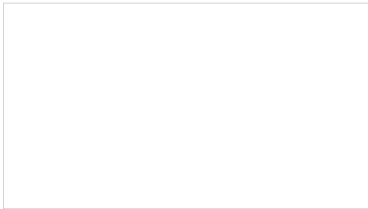
I've Been Told To Go Back Where I Came From. Here's What I Wish I Could Explain.



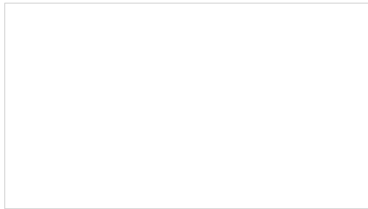
This Image Received Thousands Of Racist Comments. Here's Why I Made It.



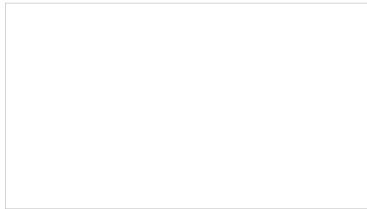
A Voice In My Head Told Me My Daughter Needed To Die. Multiple Doctors Sent Me Home Anyway.



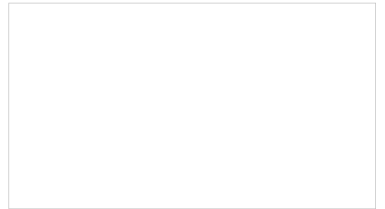
I Played The Role Of Loving Wife. Behind Closed Doors, My Husband's Secret Was Destroying Me.



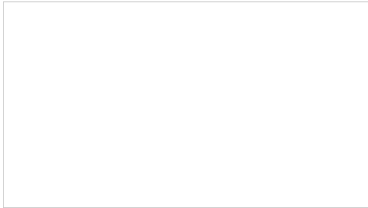
I Was Adopted From China. People Ask If I Feel 'Lucky' — And My Answer Isn't What They Expect.



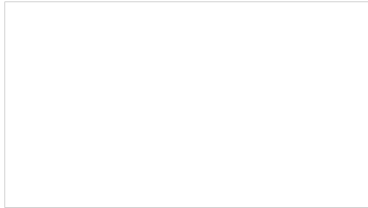
My Doctor Said I Had 16 Months To Live. I'd Be Dead Right Now If I Had Listened.



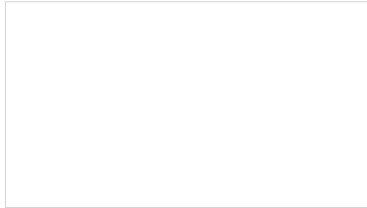
I Made A Decision At 17 That Completely Changed My Body. I Kept It A Secret — Until Now.



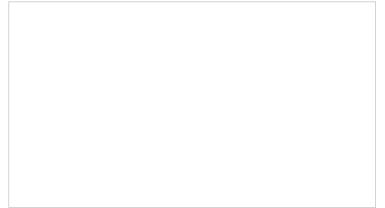
As A Child-Free 46-Year-Old, There's One Invasive Question I Want Strangers To Stop Asking Me



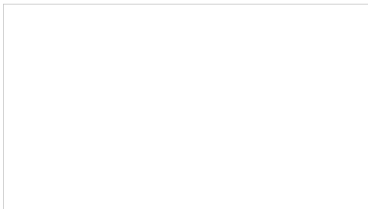
After 17 Months As A Nurse, I Had To Walk Away. You Need To Know The Real Reason Why.



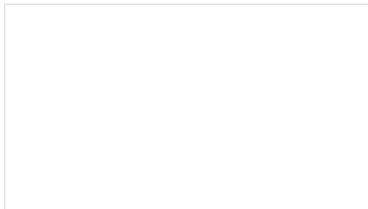
My Mom And I Fought For 55 Years. Now Battling My Son Is Making Me Rethink Everything.



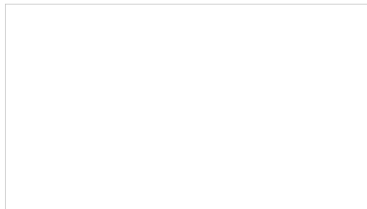
I Adopted An Internet-Famous Cat. It Changed My Life In Ways I Never Imagined.



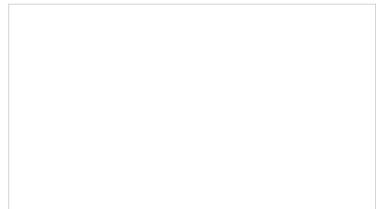
I Told The World I Was Raped. When Women Told Me They Were Too, I Was Shocked By My Response.



I Saved My Marriage By Leaving It

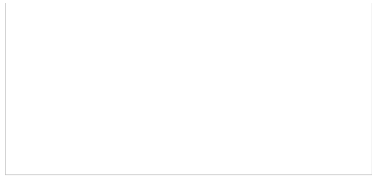


My Mother Was A Cult Leader. At Her Funeral, One Of Her Followers Put A Curse On Me.

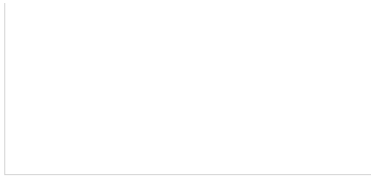


I'm a Grieving Mom. This is The One Thing I Most Want To Hear On Mother's Day.

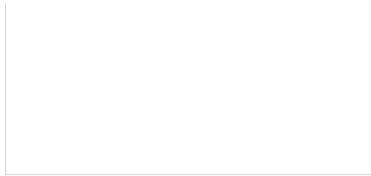




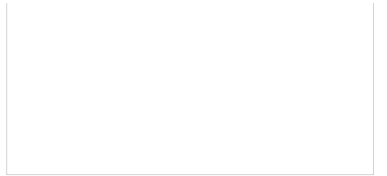
All I Want For Mother's Day Is To Be Left The Fk Alone**



My Daughter Told Me She Wanted To Die. To Save Her Life, I Gave Her Permission To End It.



After 31 Years, I Read My Mother's Suicide Note For The First Time. 5 Words Changed Everything.



I Have Multiple Distinct Dissociative Identities — And It's Nothing Like What You've Seen On TV



I Was Told My Father Was A 'Deadbeat.' After He Died, I Found Out Everything I Knew About Him Was Wrong.



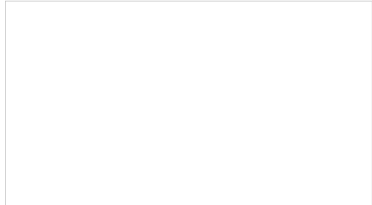
My Mom Would've Been Thrilled To Know I Was Queer. Instead, I Stayed Closeted For 25 Years.



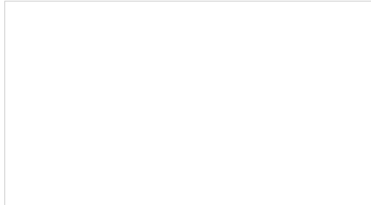
I Quit My Job And Put My Life On Pause To Spend An Entire Year Grieving



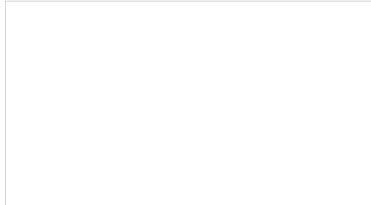
I Got Paid To Watch 1,200 Episodes Of 'The Jerry Springer Show' And It Made Me Realize 1 Unhinged Thing



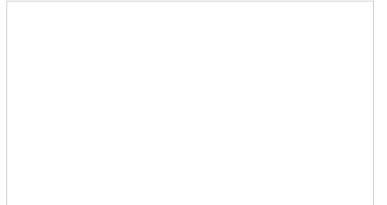
I Wore Box Braids To Work And We Might As Well Have Called A Company Meeting About It



I'm A Doctor Who Almost Died Because My Own Doctors Refused To Do This 1 Basic Thing



I Told My OB/GYN I Want To Have A Baby. Her Response Utterly Shamed Me.



I Watched My Mom Die A Terrible Death. Then The Police Started Asking Questions.



I've Been Dying To See 1 Thing On 'Wheel Of Fortune' For Years — And It Could Change Lives



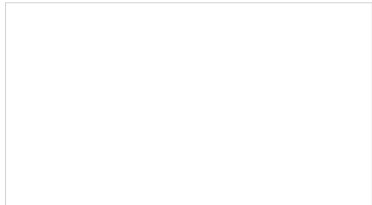
I Date Men I'll Never See Again When I Travel — And It's My Secret To A Great Trip



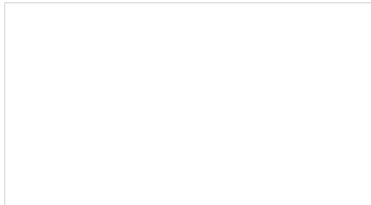
Two-Thirds Of My Body Is Covered In Scars. Here's What I Want You To Know When You See Me.



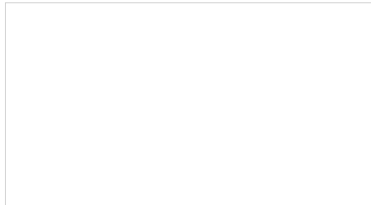
This Is What No One Tells You About Having An Invisible Illness



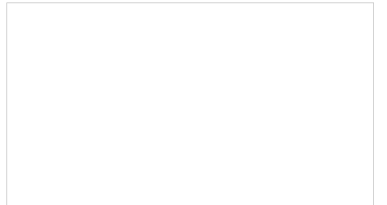
I Read A Headline That Haunted Me. I Had No Idea It Would Alter The Course Of My Life.



These Are The 4 Words We Wish We'd Never Been Told While Grieving Our Cat's Death

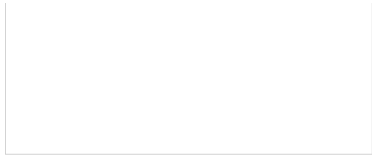


I've Broken My Ankles, Wrists, Elbows And Jaw Many Times. It Took 15 Years To Find Out Why.

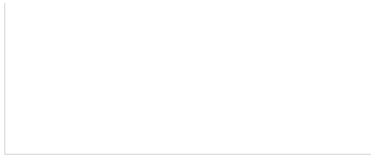


I Was Married With Kids In Small-Town Texas. Then I Came Out As Trans — And I Did Not Expect This Outcome.

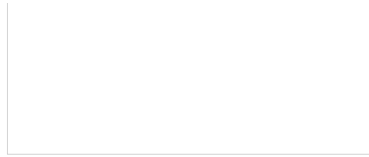




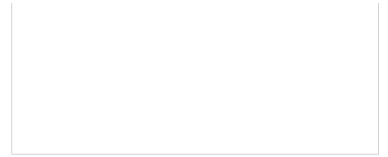
My Dad Is A Crack User. It Drove Us Apart — Until I Had An Epiphany That Changed Everything.



I Was Overjoyed To Get Engaged At 19. Then, Like With Millie Bobby Brown, The Comments Began.



I'm A Scientist Who Studies Good Sex For A Living. Here's Why I Wasn't Having Any.



I'm A 'Baby Queen.' Here's Why We Should Be Scared For Our Kids (And It's Not Because Of Drag).



My Reproductive Organs Took Me On A Wild Ride I Never Saw Coming



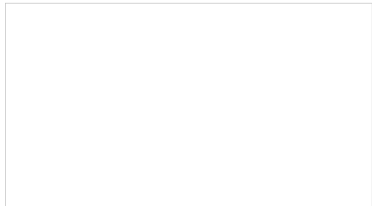
I Lost My 15-Year-Old Son. Then I Learned The Horrific Truth About What Happened Before He Died.



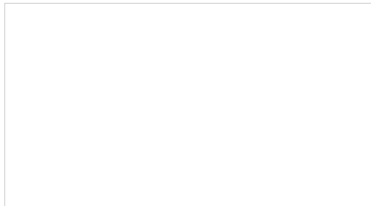
There's A New 'Miracle Cure' For My Highly Visible Skin Condition. I Don't Know If I Want It.



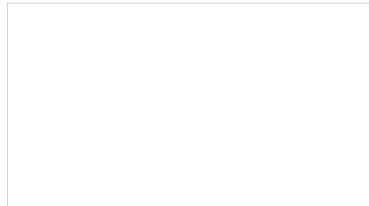
After 7 Years, My Friend Ghosted, Unfriended And Blocked Me. I Still Don't Know Why.



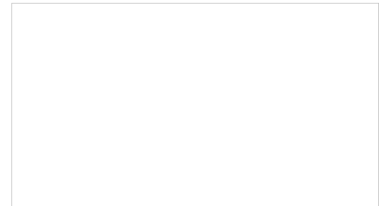
My Wife And I Were Suffering. We Took Ecstasy Together — And It Saved Our Marriage.



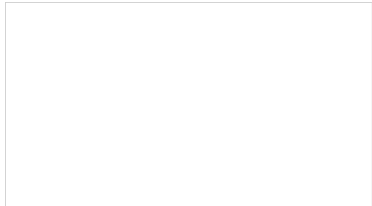
My Husband And I Built Our Life Around Cannabis. Here's What Changed When We Became Parents.



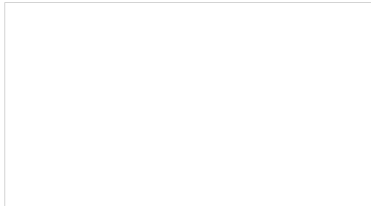
I'm A Nurse Practitioner Caring For Trans Kids. Here's What The GOP Doesn't Want You To Know.



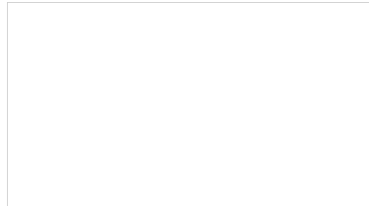
When My Partner Of 32 Years Died, I Thought My Life Was Over. Here's How I Overcame My Grief.



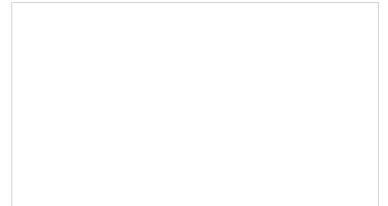
I'm A Married Mom. Here's What Happened When I Secretly Became A Phone Sex Operator.



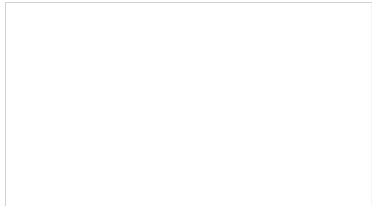
I Fell In Love With A Man More Than Twice My Age. I Wasn't Prepared For What Marrying Him Would Mean.



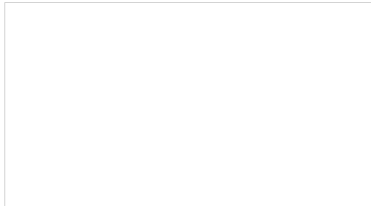
I'm A Therapist Who Treats Hyper-Masculine Men. Here's What No One Is Telling Them.



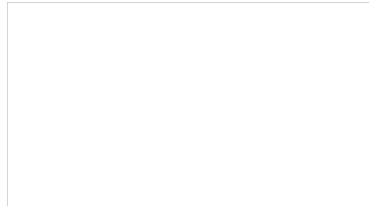
I Was 15 When I Started Partying With Rock Stars. I Told No One What They Did To Me — Until Now.



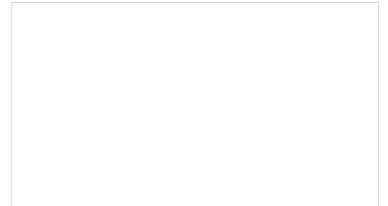
I Thought I'd Found A Trans-Affirming Therapist. What Happened At Our First Session Shocked Me.



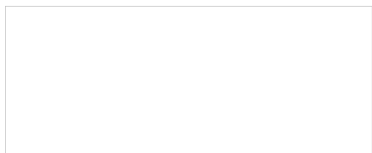
I Work At The Hospital That Saved My Trans Son's Life. Now, We Are Facing Death Threats.



My Dying Mom Chose To End Her Life With Dignity. Then Her Choice Was Stolen From Her.



I Wanted To Get Pregnant With My Gay Friend's Sperm. I Had No Idea Of The Fight We Were In For.





I Was A Mom Of 2 And PTA President. Nobody Knew I Was Also Popping 10 Ambien A Day.



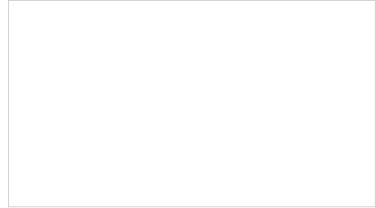
I'm Over 6 Feet Tall In A Family Of Little People. Here's What It's Like.



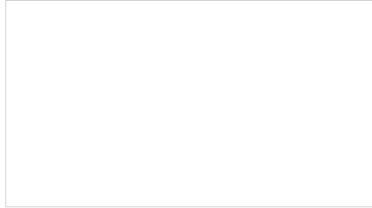
I Went Through Menopause At 44 And I Was Shocked By What It Did To My Body



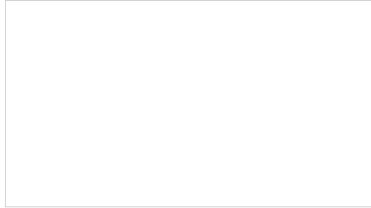
As A Queer Kid, I Fled My Small Town. 14 Years Later, A Message From My Niece Changed Everything.



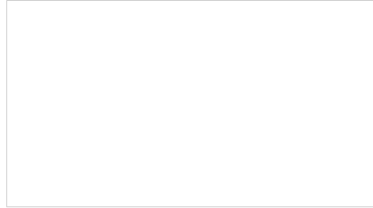
I'm A Man Who Was Sexually Assaulted At 8 Years Old. I Kept It Secret For Years — Until Now.



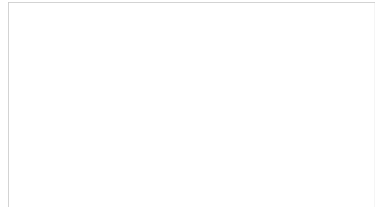
I Had One Of The Biggest Hits Of 1992. Then I Came Out As Omnisexual.



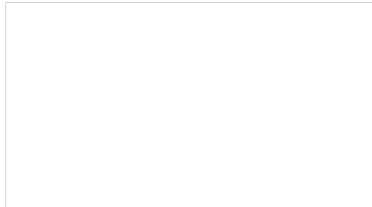
My Rescue Dog Was Supposed To Be Practice For A Baby. He Ended Up Loving Me Through Miscarriage.



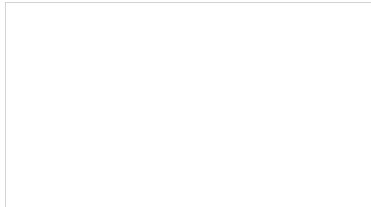
As A Psychologist, I Diagnosed ADHD For Years. I Had No Idea I Had It Myself.



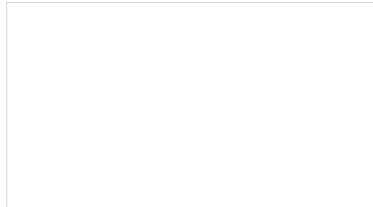
When My Dad Got Cancer, I Kept Asking, 'Why Him?' His 3-Word Response Floored Me.



My Miscarriage Left Me Heartbroken. An Anonymous Group Got Me Through — And I've Still Never Met Them.



I Appeared To Be An Incredibly Supportive Mom But I Was Secretly Failing My Trans Son



How My Son Became The Inspiration For A Groundbreaking New Disney Character

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