

Reading

I've Been Called Worse

By CJ, Age 13

In middle school, one of the worst things you can be called is “basic.”

Basic is when you just follow trends and don't have your own style. You're unoriginal, but you think you're original.

Some people at school call me basic.

It doesn't bother me; I've been called worse.

When you're LGBTQ, you get used to being called names and other mean things.

I never thought I'd be called basic, because basic means you are too much the same as everyone else and for so long I was called things because I wasn't like anyone else because my gender identity is male and my gender expression is female.

Being basic is new to me.

It's kind of like if someone said you couldn't wear black. And, then, they said you could. And, you wore black all the time because you could finally wear it. And, then, they made fun of you because they said black was boring. But, you were so excited to finally wear it. You knew you'd move on from wearing black eventually, but you were enjoying the newness of wearing black.

If you could never be basic, being basic feels fun and new.

At my elementary school, I had to edit myself. I couldn't wear whatever I wanted because I didn't feel safe.

I go to an art school now that is super accepting. I'm finally free to totally be myself. That

means I finally feel safe to wear the clothes that my cisgender female friends have been wearing for a few years. Baby doll tees. Crop tops. High waisted cargos. Headbands.

At first, when kids at school called me basic I felt annoyed. Then I realized something.

It's the first time in my entire life that I can be basic. It's the first time I can follow trends. I'm just now getting to put together and wear outfits that I really truly love. I can finally look like my girl friends. I can be basic because I'm safe and accepted.

I know my style will get more original, artistic, unique, creative and weird. I just need time to catch up. I admit I'm a little behind on mainstream styles because I haven't ever had time to give them a try. I'm just now getting started.

For so long, I stood out everywhere. I finally have a chance to be the same a little bit. Well, the same as a boy can be when he's in all girl clothes.

To some people seeing me (a boy) dressed the way I do is anything but basic. It just goes to prove, you can't make everyone happy all the time.

What I can do is keep on being myself, catching up on the latest mainstream trends, being creative and finding my own style again.

My mom says sometimes LGBTQ people get a late start in some things because they have to hide their true selves, true style, true feelings and true love.

She's right, if you think about it. It doesn't seem very fair, but that's just the way it is.

And, if the worst thing I'm ever called in middle school is basic, I'm pretty lucky.¹

¹ From the blog [Raising My Rainbow](#), posted October 26, 2020. Reproduced with the permission of Lori Duron.