

## You Chose Option B...

Although the insults and two-faced behavior started back up again within a month of returning from Bermuda, Ben hasn't had any extreme outbursts since the night you went to Urgent Care. Your birthday is coming up and he tells you not to make any plans. He ends up driving you across town to one of your favorite restaurants, and when you walk in, you realize that Ben rented the entire place just for your birthday. All of your favorite people are there, even some people from work that you hardly know. You're immediately in awe and feel overwhelming gratitude for Ben. As you step further into the restaurant to hug your friends, you notice rainbow decorations and a sign that says 'Happy Coming Out Day.' It sinks in – this is not a Birthday party – it's a Coming Out Party. And now, you're mortified.

Well, no turning back now, you think to yourself. Fighting the urge to run out the door, you navigate the night the best you can with a clenched jaw and many bathroom breaks to catch your breath. As you walk past a group of co-workers, you hear them make a gay joke. Later you notice that this same group ends their conversation as soon as you approach them, making you really nervous. When you get home that night, you and Ben have an intense fight and you end up checking into a pet-friendly hotel with Muppet. You're not sure what to do next, all you want to do is crawl in a hole and hide.

The environment has changed when you get to work on Monday. A few people treat you as they always have, but others act differently around you and some seem to avoid you all together. The manager of your department calls you in to his office just before five o'clock – 'There's been some cuts to the department and unfortunately your position has been outsourced.' After packing up your office you head back to the hotel. You're too tired now, but you plan to call the number the nurse gave you for the Emerge! hotline first thing tomorrow morning for emotional support.

## A Follow Up from Emerge:

A major component of the abuse Martin experienced was around his identity. Ben was exerting abusive dominance over Martin by going behind his back to make him identify as gay to everyone in his life. The decision to tell friends and family about your sexuality is very personal and it's never okay for anyone else to threaten or guilt you into doing so because it's emotionally and psychologically abusive. Other more subtle identity abuse tactics include merely threatening to out someone's partner, because doing so may be enough to ensure that the survivor falls in line with whatever their demands are.

Research shows that individuals who identify as LGBTQ who are rejected from their families experience increased health and safety risks later in life, such as being in an abusive relationship. Martin didn't feel safe around his family, friends or coworkers, and having acceptance from Ben may have been the only comfort he had. Regardless of Ben's malicious and controlling behavior, it was easier to forgive him because Martin's isolation made the sliver of acceptance Ben did give worth holding onto.



It would be common for Martin's isolation to be coupled with other barriers to getting help or leaving the relationship, such as shame and embarrassment; fear of not being believed or taken seriously; fear of retaliation, harassment, rejection or bullying; and less legal protection.

For Martin, the rejection he received from his family was reinforced when he was fired from his job. He just lost the majority of all his remaining support systems, including his paycheck and friends and renting an apartment is incredibly challenging for someone without any source of income. Given Martin's situation, he may choose to go back to Ben because he doesn't have a lot of other options, though, the abuse will likely continue to escalate. Thankfully, Martin plans to call the Emerge! hotline, which will give him access to additional options for finding and maintaining safety.

[\*\*Click here to see what would have happened if you called the hotline.\*\*](#)