Seven months ago, I came out to my family. And then eventually, the world. However, there was a point in time where I wasn’t out to anybody. And until recently, I thought that the years I’d spent hiding were the hardest years of my life. As an LGBTQ youth that was not yet out, I did have mental health problems. Depression, which gave way to anorexia, which led to me coming out. I couldn’t handle not talking to anyone about how I was feeling. About why I was so sad or about why I was so skinny. So I came out. And then everyone started to understand. Oh that’s why she was so quiet. Oh that’s why she was so thin. And for a while, I think they felt pity for me. But then that pity faded and I just became a regular part of their lives. And now, to their knowledge, I’m totally alright. Free to be me and entirely at peace. But that is far from the truth. While I thought that coming out would take this huge weight of my shoulders, like most confessions do, it did nothing but bring my biggest fears to life.

Because everyone now knows I’m gay, I can’t change my clothes around other girls without there being awkward tension. I can’t accidentally brush my hand across another girls arm, or leg, or butt, without there being a sidelong glance and a quick step in the other direction. I can’t sit through an entire period of Government without there being a discussion over whether of not gay people should have rights and the teacher asking for my input. I can’t hear a gay joke without feeling 100 faces staring at me all wondering if I will be offended. I can’t get through an entire day of school without receiving a dirty look from the secretly homophobic kid. And I can’t imagine a day in which I don’t have to come out in some embarrassing way, shape, or form to new and different people. And
it’s being humiliated time and time again in all these different ways that causes LGBTQ youth like me to feel despondency and dejection.

Living as an LGBTQ youth is this never ending cycle of feeling ashamed. It’s a constant barrage of weird looks and uncomfortable situations. Even after coming out, these cycles and bombardments continued without ceasing. My depression didn’t leave after I came out. There are days where I experience sadness and I feel isolated. I occasionally find myself back in a place where I have no one to talk to. I don’t want to bother anyone with my problems, because these little aspects of everyday life that hurt me, don’t feel like real problems. And because I don’t want to bother anyone with my minuscule issues, I’m not sure where to start in my search for help. It’s in this way that my ability to access mental health services has been affected.

Because I never had anyone telling me that it’s okay to feel unhappy after coming out, I didn’t even consider the fact that I could look for help when I did. And because everyone around me assumed that I was doing okay, I simply went along with it. Why ruin their perfect perception of me? I only wish that I’d realized sooner that it’s okay to feel sad when going through the things that I have, and continuously do, go through. And I wish that I could find help without feeling like no one cared for what I have to say. Though I now know how to better handle my depression, I still hope for a time when I don’t feel like a freak whose searching for asylum every time I go to seek help from mental health services..

So not only do I write this paper to describe my experiences as a gay youth with mental health issues, but I also write this to express my hopes for future LGBTQ+ communities. I hope that there are LGBTQ youth with mental health issues who when
coming out, don’t feel like they have to be perfectly ok afterwards. I hope they know that it’s alright to be sad on days that’d would give most people a reason to be sad about. And I hope no matter what, that if an LGBTQ youth feels like they need help from mental health services, that they do everything in their power to get that help. Because while I was lucky enough to make it through on the other side with only a few scratches, I know there are kids out there that will need a little more. And if this essay does nothing but talk about some lesbian who never received help because she felt the option was never presented to her, then for me, writing this essay had no purpose. I want nothing more than for LGBTQ youth to have someone telling them that suffering from mental health issues is ok. And I want LGBTQ youth to have someone telling them that seeking help for those issues is ok. While my experiences may not be completely comparable to the experiences of others, I want to be the person that gives LGBTQ+ youth the options that never quite presented themselves to me.