

Dear Robbie,

You're walking around with a cramp in your stomach. You feel trapped within yourself. The pressure of being a high school freshman and playing for the U-16 national team is stressful enough. But on top of that you're worried that you're different from everyone, especially your teammates. And you think that if they figure out who you are, you won't be able to play the sport you love, or your family won't agree with it. Sometimes you pray and think, "I don't wanna live through this. Why can't I be like my brothers and sisters?"

I'm not going to tell you to come out at 19 years old. I'm not going to tell you what's going to happen in the future either, because the journey is important. But I want you to realize that God made you this way for a reason. You're not damaged or going to hell. You didn't have a choice in this. But you do have a purpose in life, just as everyone does. When guys say things in the locker room, remind your ~~self~~ that most of them don't actually feel this way. They aren't really homophobic. These are people trying to please others, or think that's what they're supposed to say. Everyone is dealing with something, whether they're gay or straight. You don't have to feel like you're alone. Which brings me to this: If there's any great advice I can give you, it's to find someone you can speak to about what you're feeling inside, someone you can trust who won't judge or expose you. Because you can't walk around with a burden like the one you're carrying. You've got to share this with somebody. I know I said I wouldn't tell you what your future holds, but I will tell

You that everything's going to be fine - one day
you'll be happier than you ever thought possible.
And while you can't envision sharing your secret
now, the world is changing. People are becoming
more accepting. And when the time is right,
the day might come when you're ready to face
the world as the beautiful person you truly are.

