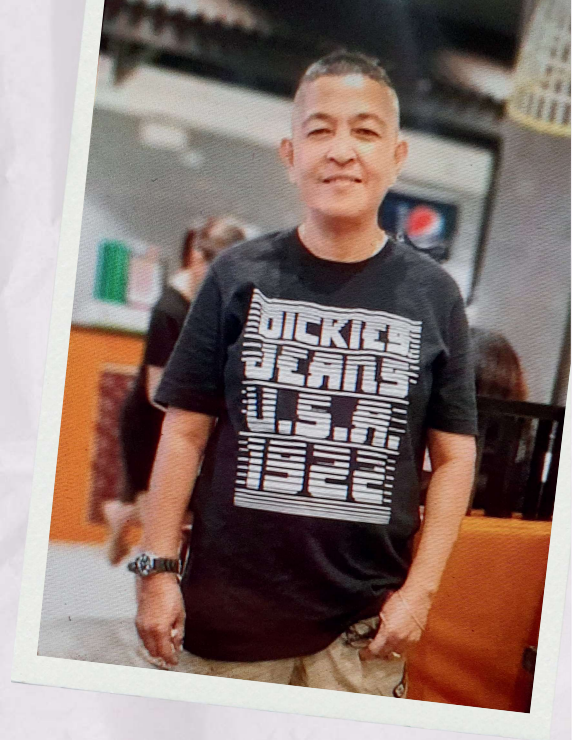


# Ibrahim

lesbian, 57, Davao City, currently working

You have to care and give back to your family no matter what.



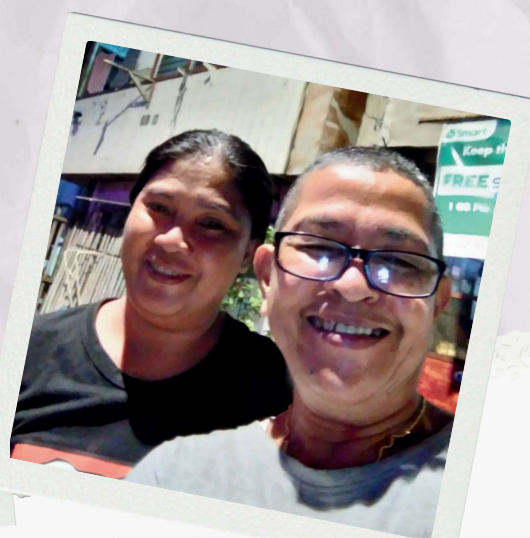
## Growing Up Lesbian

Since Grade Three, I knew I was a lesbian. Now that I am 57, nothing has changed. I was already out to my family and friends at a young age. It was not a surprise to my family because I was a tomboy ever since they knew from how I moved and talked.

I am the ninth of ten siblings. Since my father was the only one earning a living, his work could not support the whole family. My mother was always sick and could not walk. During high school, my father and siblings assigned me to care for our mother, being that I was second to the youngest. I do not know if it is because I am lesbian, and they assumed I would not get married. But I had no choice. I stopped my studies and took care of my mother.

## Work And Family Life

When I was older, I left Davao City and went to Manila, and worked as a janitor. The work entailed lifting heavy objects, and after only a few months, I quit and went back home. I preferred my province to the city. Manila was crowded and noisy everywhere. When I returned to Davao, my niece had a baby. Since I was taking care of my mother, I was asked to also take care of the baby, who became my grandchild. I then stayed home for good.



## Intimate Relationships

At age 22, I had my first serious girlfriend. She was from a well-off family, unlike me, who was poor. Both our families were against our relationship. It was the first time my family disapproved of something I did. My girlfriend's family was against me because I was a lesbian, and they reasoned that my girlfriend would gain nothing from our relationship. I had no work when I was dating her. I had not finished high school. I felt her parents were right. My parents and siblings discouraged me from continuing the relationship. Hence, we ended the relationship. I let her go. I believe that family comes first. Being with and taking care of my family was my purpose in life.

## Reflections On Growing Older

At age 56, I am now hearing impaired. I minimize drinking alcohol and try to live healthier. The grandchild I took care of is now a teenager. I also take care of my two older sisters. They all live with me. My two older sisters received a small pension from the government when they reached 60, but the money they received did not cover their maintenance medicines. My niece, the mother of my grandchild, works abroad to send us money. Aside from her monthly support, we have a small store in the house. The store keeps me busy.

I am a member of a lesbian group called Lez Be Friends. We shop, go to the market together, give and receive advice from each other, and even do charity events. I am very comfortable with the group. It's almost like a second family where I feel I belong and can be happy despite my home responsibilities, challenges, and problems. Because of my group, I learned to be humble and get along with everybody, and to remember that wherever I go, there is a friend.

## Message For LGBTI Youth

We should be fair and honest to other people. We may not be the luckiest, but we have friends that will be worth more than a thousand things. We must not forget about God, who gave us life, good health, strength, and what we have. We should have faith and be good people.

