

Diversity &amp; inclusion, Life at Nuance

# Just Being Who We Are: Personal Stories from Our LGBTQ Community

[Life at Nuance](#)

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In honor of LGBTQ Pride month and in celebration of all diverse communities, four folks from our Nuance Pride network have shared their personal stories and histories about their journeys to become their authentic selves. Learn what it is like to come out as a trans man, grow up in the LGBTQ community, find positive role models, and be yourself in the workplace.

**Dave Seuss** worked on the People Team at Nuance on a mission to create excellent employee experiences. Dave managed employee communications across corporate functions, leads security awareness programs, and actively supports the Nuance Pride network. Prior to this role, Dave managed communications for Nuance's Global Technology Solutions team with a focus on security. Prior to Nuance, Dave spent a few decades managing corporate communications, content marketing, and social media programs at Boston-area tech firms including RSA and EMC. Dave holds a B.A. in History from Bates College.

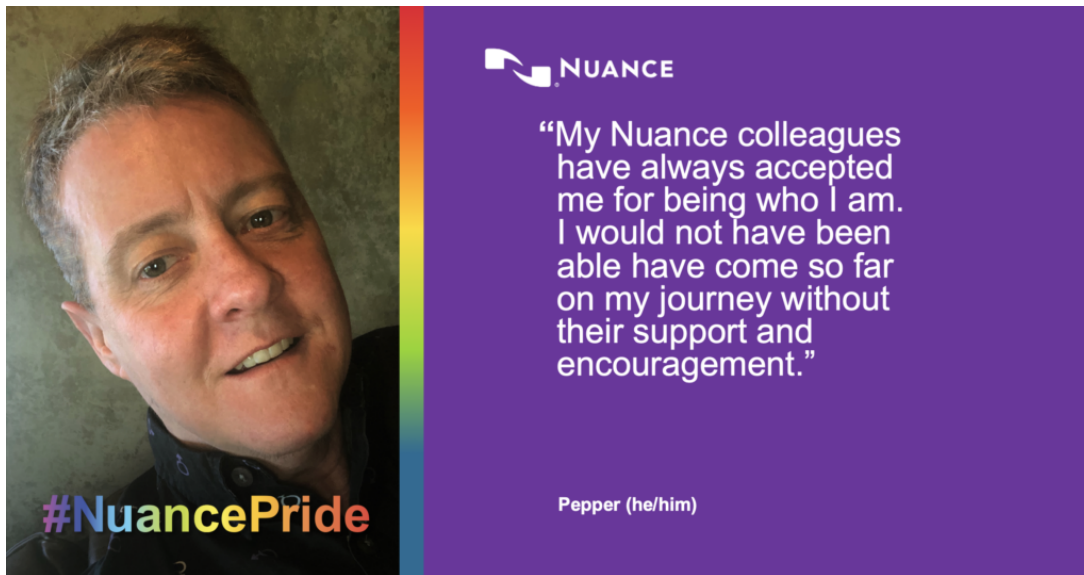
Sometimes those of us in the LGBTQ community need to sort out who we are before we can live proudly as we really are. By being true to ourselves we can be true to others, including friends, families, spouses, and colleagues.

In honor of LGBTQ Pride month and in celebration of all diverse communities, four folks from our Nuance Pride network including yours truly would like to share our personal stories about our unique journeys to become our authentic selves.

Our histories may be somewhat different – coming out as a trans man, joining a Tea Dance on Fire Island, finding positive role models, being out and proud at work – but at the end they are nearly the same.

We are who we are. Wherever we are. And we're pretty great.

### Pepper: A Lifetime in the LGBTQ community



In 1968, at the age of 4, I started to spend many days each summer at Fire Island Pines, a gay male community on a barrier beach off the coast of Long Island. Fire Island Pines is very popular that time of year with men from NYC and elsewhere. My family and I often walked a few miles to Fire Island Pines from the public beach across Long Island bay, near our own place in Sayville.

My bohemian artist mother loved walking past the mid-century modern beach houses at Fire Island Pines and dancing in the afternoon at the Blue Whale, where the DJs had started to experiment with mixing music and light. Because dancing started at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the same time as British high tea would commence, the daily event became known as a "tea dance".

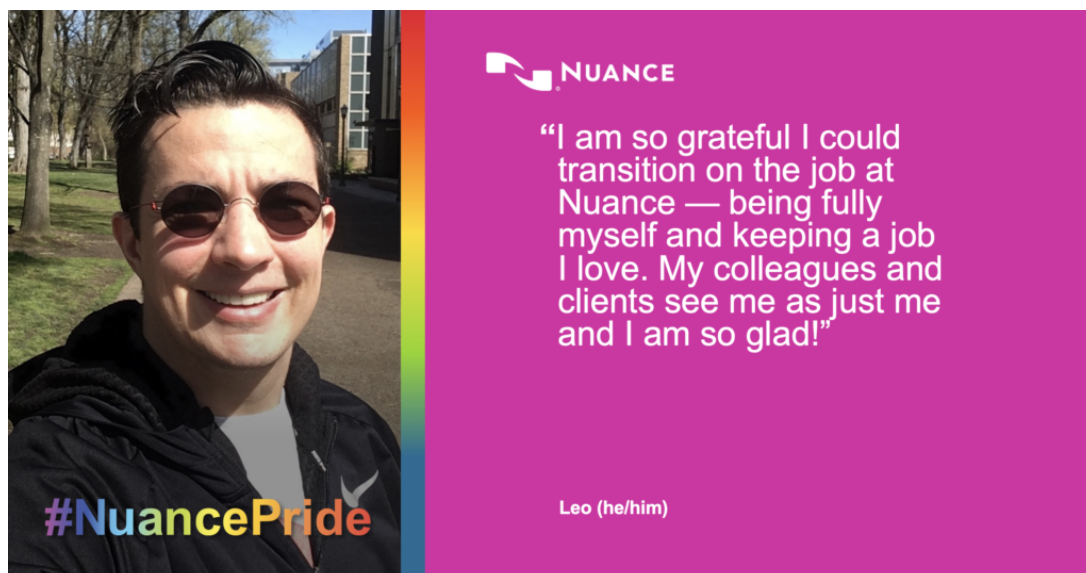
Cow skin rugs, paintings, and furniture designed by Mies van der Rohe and Charles Eames were the norm in our home in Sayville. More suitable for a Frank Lloyd Wright house, if you ask me. Add in our big, black Great Dane, and my friends who came by felt like they were visiting the Addams Family.

None of this made things easier when, at the age of 11, I realized I was transgender. There was no support then, you were simply a freak. At 16 I made a conscious decision to come out as a lesbian. This community more or less accepted me. And that life was hard enough. But it never felt like an honest expression of who I really was.

I spent 37 years living as a lesbian, trying to ignore my truth. I counted my blessings as laws were passed in my adopted state of Massachusetts to protect the rights of LGBTQ people. I could not have been prouder to marry my wife in 2013 the same week that marriage equality became the law of our land.

But three years ago, I couldn't ignore my truth anymore. With the help of Nuance Pride, and a wonderful outside support group, I started taking my first steps toward transition. Today I finally feel complete. It's been a long journey but the best things in life are worth waiting for!

### Leo: Breaking Out of the Box



I learned many truths after coming out as a bisexual trans man. First, I had more courage than I thought. Being brave changed me, and I'm so grateful. Second, coming out and living authentically was incredibly freeing. I had been afraid so many bad things would happen upon realizing I was trans. But instead of it being bad news it only led to only happy headlines. Third, I spent far too much time doubting myself because my journey didn't fit common narratives.

But it really is true that every story is unique, and we don't have to try to fit in a box to be queer. Breaking out of boxes is kind of the point.

For a little context, I am 44 and spent my first 37 years living as a cisgender straight woman. Years ago, I had inklings that something else about me was true. But they were only tiny whispers at the hidden in the back of my consciousness. I had been trying very hard to be a feminine cis woman yet also trying to be "one of the boys".

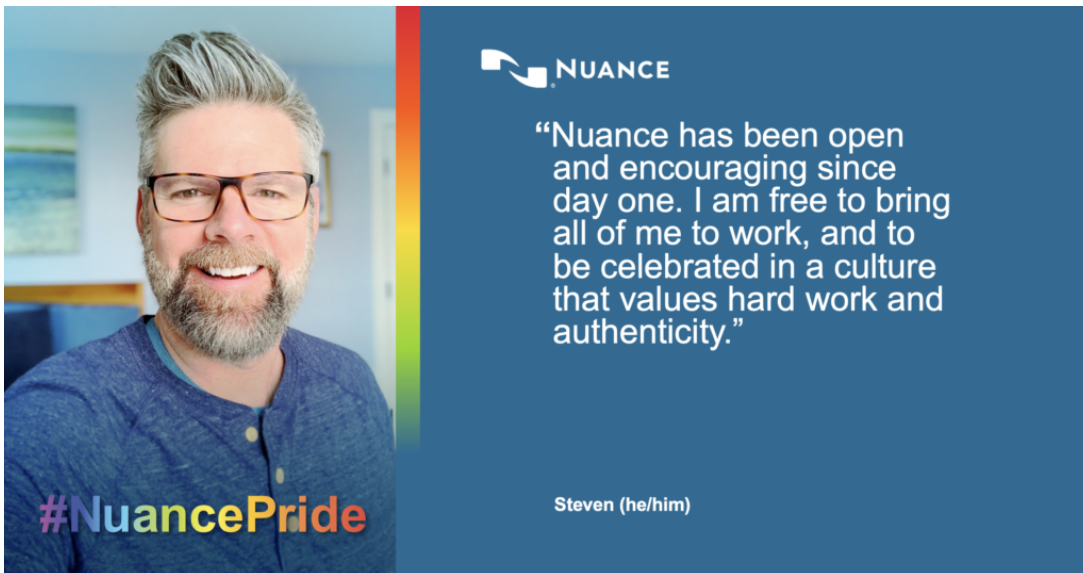
When a friend called me trans, it rocked my world. And not in a good way. I cried myself to sleep, so afraid of coming out. I worried about being queer bashed or losing my friends and family.

None of this happened, thankfully. Instead, I found freedom.

I do not take privilege and safety for granted, nor the rights that were won with the lives and loves and labor of the queer community, particularly black transwomen like Marsha P. Johnson and transwomen of color like Sylvia Rivera. I seek to honor our ancestors in liberation work by committing to helping dismantle white supremacy and striving for the liberation of all those on the margins.

My dream is that all who feel different may know they are fabulous. The world needs you and your unique and incredible self.

### **Steven: Visibility Led to Acceptance**



I grew up in a very evangelical world, filled with trite, simple stereotypes of people groups outside of our faith. This made it very easy to lump these groups into categories of “good,” “bad,” and “going straight to hell.” Back then I regularly heard statements that described groups such as all Catholics in a certain light, or any Democrat is a certain way. However, the group that was talked about with an unbending, negative zeal was “the gays” or “the homosexuals.”

Back then the gay community was so roundly vilified that I imagined them all to be walking around with horns on their head with Satan guiding their minds. This made it very difficult to get to know anyone from that group and see them as individuals with hopes and dreams or hurts and sadness. Add to that, I felt my own struggle to face the fact that I was also gay.

As I got older, I started to run across people who were gay, whether in real life or in TV, film, or music. I saw that they were people just like me and were fun and powerful and silly and smart and everything in between. I began seeing gay role models in different shows, theater, and even politics, which led me to imagine a future where I could be who I was meant to be.

This is why having LGBTQ+ people being visible in all walks of life is so important for ultimate acceptance. Acceptance by those feeling like they need to hide from who they are, and acceptance by those in our families and communities. I now aim to be one of those LGBTQ+ people that others can see and understand that they can be out and proud and contributing members of society.

My dream is that one day we will have so many out and proud citizens across the globe that no group could easily categorize us as any one thing. And that young men and women will be able to see through trite stereotypes or false attacks from groups to see that we are all equal members of the human race. If I had seen those public role models as a child, I would have realized that I was fine just as I was.

**Dave: That’s So Gay**



Six months after graduating from college I landed a job at a small software company in Boston. I was pretty comfortable in my own shoes after coming out over the prior four years at a progressive school. I was confident about who I was. I was no more or less deserving of kindness and respect.

My manager at that first job was also a local. Just about my age. I got her. I also got what she meant when she said, "That's so gay!" — far too often, and among other things not unlike it. There was a gist to "that's so gay" that wasn't hard to get. It meant something was bad, perverted, or wrong – spoken with malice towards gay folks. I knew she wasn't saying these things in a conscious, hurtful manner. It was slang we grew up with that we didn't dissect as adults.

After sharing my perspective she was horrified and hated the thought she had hurt anyone with her words. It was 1991 and I gave her credit for quickly embracing it all. There were very few people back then – in our communities and across the country – who said being gay was ok.

Several years later I worked at a security firm with an amazing corporate culture that was acquired by a company with a notoriously awful corporate culture. Dread set in. Our new director said the word "sissy" in our very first team meeting, followed twice more in the month to follow.

"Sissy" was never directed at me in particular, but it remained inappropriate in every way. It stung. I had to look it up. It literally translated to "a weak, effeminate male homosexual". I couldn't discuss it with him, though. Following process, I had to tell my manager who then had to then consult HR. I was given the option to solve it among we three or request official action. I only wanted the first option. It worked out fine, apart from feeling like the team's oversensitive minority.

I've since repossessed that word he had no right to use. Yup, I am a sissy. No debate there. But I'm not weak.

Throughout my career I remained out at work. It hasn't been easy. If someone shared what they did over the weekend with their wife, I would share what I did that weekend with my boyfriend. I'd share it just as casually as they did, while being resentful that it might get interpreted as a political statement. But I wasn't going to edit myself to avoid even just three seconds of silent awkwardness.

Over more recent years I have had the honor of being a member of LGBTQ employee groups where we can make a difference just by being visible and comfortable in our own shoes. Our Pride group here at Nuance has its origins in heart and authenticity. I can shine here. Just by being myself.

**Tags:** [Life at Nuance](#), [Pride](#)