



JEN'S TRAIL GUIDES · No. 1

Finding Your Warm Cove

A gentle companion for coming out later in life.

Practical reminders, thoughtful questions, and grounded responses —
so you can walk into community with confidence, and never earn your place.

by Jen Solin Coaching

Before you take another step.

Coming out later in life can feel like arriving at a trailhead everyone else seems to know by heart. The maps look confusing, the language feels new, and it's tempting to believe you're somehow behind.

You're not behind. You're arriving with a lifetime of love already lived — right on time. Your time.

A MOMENT FROM THE TRAIL

A woman once told me she almost skipped her first lesbian gathering, afraid someone would ask how long she'd known — that she'd use the wrong words, or feel like she didn't belong. When she finally went, another woman simply smiled, hugged her, and said:

"We're so glad you're here."

This little guide is an invitation to walk in gently — curious, grounded, and unhurried. You don't have to earn your place. You get to choose the people who make it safe to become more yourself.

And, you get to choose the trails you walk down, with whom, the pauses you take along the way, and the new paths you want to blaze. There are many people who have been waiting for you to join along on this journey.

— Jen ❤️

Carry these with you.

Ten reminders to carry with you. Read them before heading out into the wild.

- 🚩 There is no lesbian consensus — you don't have to agree with everyone to belong.
- 🚩 You don't need to know the music, the shows, or the slang.
- 🚩 You don't have to pick a label today. Or ever.
- 🚩 You aren't behind. You're arriving with a lifetime of love already lived.
- 🚩 Curiosity will carry you further than confidence.
- 🚩 Notice how your body feels around new people — it usually knows first.
- 🚩 Red flags matter. Green flags matter too.
- 🚩 You're allowed to be a beginner and a whole grown woman at once.
- 🚩 Community is plural — if one cove doesn't fit, the ocean is still yours.
- 🚩 You already belong. You always did.

IF THE TRAIL FEELS ROUGH

On any well-traveled path there are some weary, tired long-time travelers. Many long-time lesbians have loved for decades with no map, little support, and real threats along the way — like hiking the Appalachian Trail in flip flops. If you meet a disgruntled hiker, it has nothing to do with you. You belong here, and you're needed. Don't let the lesbians with sore feet keep you off the trail — many more will greet you with open arms.

● LISTEN FOR THIS

What tells you someone is emotionally safe?

The question isn't "What do I need to do to fit in?" — it's this one.

WARM SIGNS

They ask about you — and listen.
They stay curious.
They speak compassionately about
past relationships.
There's some levity in the conversation.
They treat the people around them kindly.
They recognize being a work in progress.
Your nervous system settles near them.
They can own a mistake.
They welcome your newness.

THORNS WORTH NOTICING

Being quizzed on "how long you've known."
"Baby gay" said to shrink you.
Rushing intimacy.
Not asking questions, or talking over you.
Every ex was "crazy."
Treating your story as less real.
No close friendships of their own.
Your gut whispering: careful.

● PAUSE HERE

After a gathering — or meeting somebody — ask yourself:

Did I leave feeling more like myself, or less? · Did they make room for me?

Am I already making excuses for things that don't sit right?

Am I already planning our wedding — moving too quickly?

Am I counting her out because one of us was nervous and it wasn't perfect?

What's one act of self-care for being courageous enough to meet new people?

And remember: "We're all beautiful works of art — and we're also all pieces of work."

● TRY THIS

Gentle responses you can borrow.

Not scripts — starting points. Make them yours.

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"You're basically a baby gay."

YOU MIGHT SAY

"I may be new to dating women, but I'm not new to loving."

NOTICE *Do they smile and soften — or keep testing you?*

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"How long have you known?"

YOU MIGHT SAY

"I think part of me always knew. I'm just glad I get to live it now."

NOTICE *Do they meet your story with curiosity, or with a quiz?*

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"So what's your type? What's your label?"

YOU MIGHT SAY

"I'm still writing that part. Right now I'm more interested in how people make me feel. Do you have a label you like?"

NOTICE *Do they let your answer breathe?*

More responses you can borrow.

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"I'm not interested in dating later-in-lifers."

YOU MIGHT SAY

"What has you take that stance? Did something happen?"

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"All women who come out later in life go back to men."

YOU MIGHT SAY

"Really? I just burned down a figurative house to liberate myself into being my true self — I can't imagine ever shrinking again. But you're right, all kinds of things can happen."

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"You're bisexual??"

YOU MIGHT SAY

"Yes — is that a problem for you? I'm so curious about the strong reaction. Tell me more?"

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"Why didn't you tell me you came out later in life before we met?"

YOU MIGHT SAY

"It didn't occur to me that it would be a deal breaker — I never got that manual. The last woman I dated had no issue, so I'm curious. Tell me more?"

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"You didn't live through what I have — you'll never understand my culture."

YOU MIGHT SAY

"No, I didn't — I lived a different timeline. I'd love to learn what coming out in the '80s was like for you. That must have been so hard."

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS

"You're still friends with your husband?"

YOU MIGHT SAY

"We are — he's my best friend and an amazing dad to our two grown kids. And splitting time means more space for whoever I choose to date."

*Don't shrink yourself trying
to fit into a community.*

*Find the people who make it safe
to become more yourself.*

Find your warm cove. ♥



Want more conversation?

The Manatee Lesbian Love & Connection Cards were created for moments exactly like these — first dates, fifth dates, long partnerships, circles of friends.

180 gentle prompts · on sale for \$34, shipping included (U.S. & Canada).

And if this season feels especially tender, I'd love to walk alongside you:
a free 20-minute clarity call is always open. No pressure — just another trail.

jensolincoaching.com · support@jensolincoaching.com · (954) 300-3506 · Facebook: Manatee Cards

Jen's Trail Guides · No. 1 · © Jen Solin Coaching · A small, queer-owned business