

Sister...

This is the story of an older sister's journey of accepting her younger transgender sibling, starting from not being supportive at all, to being fully supportive and even becoming the one who convinces other family members to also fully accept her brother.

Living in Pati District, Takeo Province, and having a total of 12 siblings, Tit Heng is the third older sister of Tit Hor who identifies as a transgender man. While sitting and chatting with the Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) team on a wooden bed under the house with wooden walls and a zinc roof, Tit Heng recalled: "At first, I absolutely did not support my brother being transgender and same-sex lover. Because I had never seen anyone being crazy in love with someone of the same gender. I was also worried that he would have no children and no better future. I was always trying to persuade my younger sibling to marry a man, and have one or two children and a complete family like mine.

I have three children - two girls and a boy. My eldest daughter is studying medicine at the university. She explained to me that: ***"Mom! Same-sex love is a natural and unforbidden feeling of love! You may think of the beginning how you loved dad? It is the same feeling for aunty [refers to Tith Hor] loving women. If you tried to get dad to love men – would it be possible? So, you should understand his [Tith Hor] heart and not try to force him anymore."***



After listening to my daughter's explanation, I began to think and gradually opened my heart to accept my brother, because my mother and other siblings had also opened their hearts to accept him.

Another reason is that I saw my younger brother and his partner loving and caring for each other so dearly, and not giving up on each other when they face difficulties or problems. They both work very hard, save money and manage their finances well. This makes me see it as a true love and happiness for a couple. My younger brother's wife is a widow with two children, a good and polite person who cares about the well-being of her family and relatives, especially taking care of and loving my younger brother with all her heart.



On February 13th 2025, I attended RoCK's **'Solidarity for Love'** event at a large hotel in Phnom Penh. It was the first time I had the opportunity to attend such a huge event with so many



participants, high-level government officials and celebrities – both traditional as well as contemporary. I saw that there were many LGBT+ community members from many provinces and cities, and LGBT+ couples sweetly and warmly loving and caring for each other.

After returning home, I asked myself, ***"who am I to not support my own younger sibling?"***

This question arose when I heard the story sharing from one of the talented and famous singers in Cambodia, Mrs. Khat Sokhim, who shared how she accepted her younger sister who is a lesbian woman, with her great empathy and love as an older sister and who is also like a mother. I truly admire her courage, and this made me wonder: ***"As for me, who am I to not be willing to open my heart to 100 percent accepting my younger brother – like she does?"***

I also deeply admire the sincere love and tenacious struggle of same-sex [LGBT+] couples, especially my own brother.



All of these reasons made me open my eyes and think more carefully, until I eventually stopped being angry, stopped forbidding, and stopped over worrying about my brother. **I now fully accept my brother and his wife without any further hesitation.** Because of these wonderful stories, I am determined to help bring these good stories to those around me. I really want my entire family to accept Hor with all their heart and soul, just like I do. I understand very well that love, empathy, and support from parents and family are really important, which can give children, siblings or relatives who are LGBT+ persons the motivation, confidence, and courage, in a similar way as my younger sibling and me. I will always be by the side of my brother and sister-in-law, no longer letting them be afraid or lonely."

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