

Dear Past Me

By Anna Diemer

Hi. It's me. Or, well, it's you from the future, in 2026. I wanted to write to you to give you some reassurance about what's to come over the next six years. I know it's 2020 right now, in the throes of a quarantine that feels like it's never going to end. You just quit your adjunct job and officially decided not to go back to school for your DMA, giving up on your dream of becoming a college professor, at least for now, or maybe forever. It's just you, your online clients, and a MacBook Air that sounds like it's launching into space every time you plug in your audio interface. We might not be 100% thriving right now, but we've made it through these six long years, and we did manage to upgrade to a MacBook Pro.

Don't worry. We're still teaching voice, and a lot of things are the same, like cooking elaborate dinners, lifting weights, and nerding out about vocal pedagogy. A few of the changes might surprise you, like moving to Asheville a few decades earlier than planned and getting really into video games.

Oh, and we're trans now.

...Perhaps I should've led with that.

It truly did seem like it came out of nowhere at first. One day, you'll be scrolling TikTok as a proud ally, watching so many lovely trans people on your feed, and suddenly you'll see a video about gender that makes you stop and say, "Oh. Ohhhh."

How did we get from that video to where we are today, you ask? Honestly, it involved a lot of feeling uncomfortable and journaling about it. Surreptitiously changing your pronouns in your email signature. Buying a new pronoun pin at the Meow Wolf gift shop during your vacation to Santa Fe. Did I mention a lot of journaling? But in 2026, we're out and proud, and we're finally out as bisexual, too. You've spent fifteen years hiding that part of yourself, and one day you'll decide that you want to show up in all your spaces as exactly who you are. The people who are truly your people will either support you or find you. I'm so proud of you for that.

Soon after your email signature goes down the she/her-to-she/they-to-they/them pipeline, you'll get your first client because you are nonbinary. I know that's a shock because we've internalized the idea that being queer is



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unprofessional, that this part of our identity is something to hide in the workplace. But a local mom decides her nonbinary sixteen-year-old needs a queer mentor, and the entire way you see your studio is turned on its head.

Less than a year later, you'll tell your branding photographer, "I want potential clients to go to my website and think, 'Wow, that person looks extremely queer, and I want to take voice lessons with them.'" Even today, I'm still a little in awe that queerness is one of the things that draws in clients, colleagues, and friends.

If coming out in your branding wasn't a big enough step, you're going to expand your studio to include gender-affirming speaking voice. You'll be excited for another way to help your newfound community and grateful for the free and sliding-scale trainings available to voice teachers who are themselves trans. I know it's hard to be a beginner, especially when you're no longer a beginner in your career, but this is worth it, I promise.

You'll become even better at modeling exercises and manipulating the shape of your vocal tract. Before long, you'll even be teaching other teachers how to do it. Just wait until you're leading a vocal exploration for a room full of speech-language pathologists at the ASHA Convention, making weird sounds together.

I wish I could tell you that everything has been trans flags and rainbows, but do you remember how it's always felt hard to fit in, like the world wasn't quite built for us? Well, it turns out we're autistic and ADHD.

I have an update about our physical health, too. We have Mast Cell Activation Syndrome, which makes all those strange food allergies, fragrance sensitivities, and years of sinus infections make sense. Accepting that you're chronically ill and neurodivergent is going to be even tougher than reckoning with your gender identity.

You'll have to relearn how to run your business when your brain works differently, from organizing daily routines to navigating the stress of conference travel. You're going to figure it out, but you're also going to spend a lot of time, nearly two years, sitting on your couch doing very little while you recover from burnout, from all those years of

commuting two hours a day and working in environments that demanded constant masking.

Even now, we still have days when we lie in bed until it's time to teach, but we're taking better care of our body and brain than we ever have before. Like the trans community, the chronic illness and neurodivergent communities are full of wonderful people who want to connect, share their experiences, offer solidarity, and imagine a more accessible world for everyone.

You'll decide to help create a tiny corner of that accessible world by making your studio as inclusive as possible. Just as they have for your queerness, clients will seek you out because you are not only neuro-affirming but neurodivergent yourself. They'll be searching for a mirror, for someone who understands.

This probably sounds like a life you never imagined you could have.

So what's the catch?

It's not going to be easy.

At times, it won't feel safe to travel within your own country. Your professional organizations will continue to hold conferences in states that are actively attacking your community. Your physical needs and dietary restrictions will be ignored at best. Voices preaching discrimination and hate will grow louder and louder. (Please, I beg of you, stay out of the comment sections.)

Sometimes, in the quiet hours before dawn or in the glare of the afternoon sun, you'll be overwhelmed with grief at

finding yourself so late, mourning all those years spent living as a puzzle piece that never quite fit.

But that's exactly why you'll keep doing this work. If you can ease this journey of self-discovery and confidence-building for just one person, it will all have been worth it.

Even though you didn't become a college professor, you're still making an impact on voices and on the whole, messy, beautiful humans who use them.

You'll help high school girls stop being bullied because their voices don't match others' expectations of how they should sound. You'll help transmasculine people relieve the tension and strain that comes from forcing their voices lower. You'll explain how the voice works to singers who thought they'd never find a teacher who understood the way they think.

Most importantly, you'll show up as your true self in your business, your relationships, and your performance spaces every single day.

You're going to be great.

Love,

Me

Anna Diemer (they/them) is the owner of Diemer Voice Studio in Asheville, North Carolina, and teaches online. They specialize in helping voice users through times of transition, from perimenopause to gender-affirming voice work. When they're not in the studio, they can be found writing along the French Broad River or performing opera as their alter ego, drag king Milo Mawile.



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