

“My child just came out as **LGBTQ+**. What do I do?”

Start by becoming a resource, not a barrier.

Family acceptance and support is the number one most important factor in the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ teens.

You can accept and affirm your child even if you don't understand. Some parents have personal histories or family values that make affirming an LGBTQ+ child difficult. You can let your child know that you haven't figured that out yet, but that your love is unshakeable.

You can live your religious beliefs and affirm your LGBTQ+ child. Many parents belong to faith traditions that do not affirm LGBTQ+ identities, yet they love and accept their LGBTQ+ child. Parents of every faith, including followers of Mormonism, Islam, Evangelical Christianity, and Orthodox Judaism (among others) are doing this. You can love your LGBTQ+ child and live out your faith.

Parent affirmation saves lives. The tragedy of LGBTQ+ youth suicide is preventable. LGBTQ+ youth have suicidal thoughts 3x to 10x as often than their heterosexual peers – this risk is greatly reduced when parents accept their child's LGBTQ+ identity.

Parent affirmation greatly improves the lives of LGBTQ+ children over their lifespan. Family acceptance has a protective impact against many other dangers than suicide alone. LGBTQ+ children who have affirming parents earn higher salaries, avoid drug and alcohol abuse, enjoy meaningful friendships and partnerships – all more often than their rejected peers.

LGBTQ Youth Communication DOs and DON'Ts[†]

Do appreciate the stress of coming out and that your child may be struggling. **Don't** ask questions about your child's body or sexual practices unless they invite you to do so.

[†] For more communication DOs and DON'Ts, visit pastart.org/lgbtq



Now That You Know, Where Do You Start?

Learning these facts is important. But it's just as crucial to create a plan for an open dialogue and to be mindful of engaging your kid with respect. Positive role modeling, compassion and the truth will go a long way to help you start communicating effectively.

Use the following steps and resources to start your own Communication Action Plan. ▶



Fast Facts

- LGBTQ+ teens whose family reject them attempt suicide at 3x the rate of teens whose families affirm their gender and sexuality.*
- LGBTQ+ teens whose family reject them use drugs and alcohol at 3-4x the rate of teens whose families affirm their gender and sexuality.*
- In the early 1970s, parents of LGBTQ+ children began meeting because their children were being beaten up or getting fired. Parent organizing against discrimination has made it possible for LGBTQ+ teens and young people to live full, constructive lives.



Tips For Success

- Use their pronouns.
- Use the language they use to describe their sexuality.
- Use the name they ask you to use.
- If/when a child comes out to you, maintain their privacy.
- Never assume a child is out to their parents or others.
- Listen with care.
- Be curious, but don't interrogate.
- Express gratitude that your child is confiding in you.

Start Here:

1 If You Think Your Child Might be LGBTQ+: Educate Yourself

- There are so many resources online,* you can educate yourself privately.
- There are hotlines and helplines.
- There are parent support groups you can attend.

2 If You Think Your Child is Struggling with Coming Out, Create Openings for the Conversation: Look for Your Moment.

- Refer to LGBTQ+ issues or high achieving role models in the news.
- Share a story about something you shared with your parents that was scary or hard because of differences in your values or generational differences.
- Have LGBTQ+ friends over for dinner and have fun conversation in front of your child about their amazing lives.
- Have a person in your faith who is LGBTQ+ or who has an LGBTQ+ child over to hang out and talk about their coming out process in front of your child.

3 You've Had the Conversation: Now What?

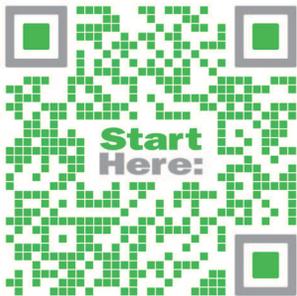
- How did it go? Are there things you wish you did better? Are there things you'd like to take back? Coming out is a process not an event. You can amend statements. You can apologize if you made a misstep. You can stay open to more conversation.
- You can also follow up in fun, sweet, and affirming ways. What are your child's favorite ways of communicating or celebrating? How can you show your support on their terms? Leave little notes around. Buy them a book by an LGBTQ+ musician or athlete or activist that they care about.



4 Moving Forward: Don't Stop!

- Don't talk about a kid's LGBTQ+ identity as a difficulty or a problem.
- Don't come out for them to others without their permission.

Committing to visible and concrete support may seem challenging at first, but helpful information is out there. Resources, data and more are available at PAstart.org/LGBTQ. Use our collection of links, videos and tools to create a strategy that will engage and empower you. They're all designed to help you get started.



* For an expanded set of additional resources, all data citations and bonus interactive materials, click on the QR code above or visit pastart.org/lgbtq

Learn More.
PAstart.org

 Commonwealth Prevention Alliance

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