

A guide for  
families of  
young lesbian,  
gay and bisexual  
individuals and  
those questioning  
their sexuality



Dad...  
Mum...

...I'm a  
Lesbian

...I'm Gay

...I'm  
Bisexual

[www.norfolklgbtproject.co.uk](http://www.norfolklgbtproject.co.uk)



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## My child has just come out to me.... What do I do?

This is one of the many questions a parent will ask when their child comes out to them as either lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Most parents will assume that their child will grow up to be heterosexual and they will never hear the words  
“Mum... dad...I’m gay”

The most important support that you can continue to give your child is love, continue to love them for who they are, even if you cannot accept their sexuality they are still your child.  
Remember – this is not about you.

Also understand that they cannot be cured, being LGBT is not an illness and you should not treat it as one. It may take time for you to come to terms with what you have been told but you will get there if you allow yourself time to listen and understand what your child is telling you.

For some young LGBT individuals, it is a big step for them to take in coming out to family and friends and no doubt they will be nervous and frightened in telling you for the fear of been rejected and hurt by your possible negative reaction.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide support/advice for parents, foster parents, carers, and family members of young lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals who have just “come out” or are questioning their sexuality.

We hope this booklet will help you to understand, support, accept and continue to love your child for who they truly are.

## Parent's Reactions

Countless parents who consider themselves to be totally accepting of lesbian, gay and bisexual people and who do not consider themselves prejudiced or judgemental are likely to be, if only momentarily, knocked off balance by the announcement that their son or daughter is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

As a sense of loss as well as a whole range of other emotions are common to many parents who have just learnt of their child's sexuality. Emotions may include guilt, denial or worry about how their child's sexuality will be viewed by others in society.

To some parents it can come as a relief to know that their child is lesbian, gay or bisexual. They may have noticed a change in their child's behaviour that they have become withdrawn, anxious or even depressed. As a loving, concerned parent, your mind can go into overdrive worrying about what is wrong with your child. So to be told by your child that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual can come as a relief.

Society is made up of people from every walk of life who are successful, content and satisfied - and who also happen to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. You will no doubt already know of famous gay celebrities but there are many lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals who are successful in business, as teachers, health professions, lawyers. Therefore your acceptance, love and understanding of your child's sexuality will contribute to them achieving whatever goal they set out to accomplish.





## Positive Reactions

- Let them speak.
  - Listen!
- “I love you, no matter what”
  - “Is it ok if I ask you some questions so I can understand much better?”
- “Thank you for telling me”
  - “Your happiness is all that matters”
  - “If you need anything, I am always here”

## Negative Reactions

- “You’ll grow out of it, give it time”
  - “Keep it to yourself”
- Don’t brush it under the carpet.  
“Does this mean that you will never have children?”
  - “Where did we go wrong?”
    - “It is not normal”
  - “It is not the life we wanted for you”
    - “It’s just a phase”





## Is it my fault my child is gay?

Many parents feel guilty when their child comes out to them, they feel that it may be their fault, but there is no evidence between how parenting can influence a child's sexuality.

Individuals who are lesbian, gay or bisexual come from all different backgrounds. There are instances where there is one gay twin and the other straight or there is more than one gay child in the family. They are who they are and it had nothing to do with who you are or how you brought your child up.

The sooner you have learnt to accept that your child being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not a lifestyle choice then the sooner life can be much more positive and happier for both yourself and your child.



## Are they sure it's not just a phase...

This comment is often made by parent struggling to come to terms with their child coming out to them, completely ignoring the soul searching and personal turmoil that their child has gone through in order to accept themselves, let alone to find the courage to tell family members and friends.

If you truly believe that it is a “phase” and this is a “lifestyle” that they have chosen, and that they could easily choose a heterosexual lifestyle instead, ask yourself: who would voluntarily chose a life marked by fear of discovery, discrimination, bullies, threats of physical harm as well as rejection from family and friends?

Stonewall School Report 2017 reported that nearly half of LGBT+ pupils (45 per cent) are being bullied in Britain's schools.

Would you choose to live in circumstances that made your life a lot more difficult and kept it that way just for the sake of it? If it was as simple as making a choice that would make their lives so much easier, don't you think they would?

Take time to sit and listen to what your child is telling you, your refusal to accept or understand their sexuality may damage your relationship permanently.





## Why does he or she have to tell us?

Some parents feel that they would be much happier if their child did not come out to them, they wouldn't have then to explain or face other family members, but remember this is not about you. What you may not realise is that if you did not know; you would never really know your child as the whole human being.

A large part of their life would always be kept a secret from you and you would never meet their partner. It might seem that lying would be a better option, but an option that they may feel uncomfortable with.

The fact that your child has chosen to tell you is a positive sign that they don't want to lie or keep secrets from you and that they love you enough to want to tell you in the first place. All they are asking you is for love, understanding and acceptance for who they are.

Take their sexuality out of the equation and they are still your child.

## Worried about my gay son catching AIDS?

The idea that HIV is a “gay disease” is a myth that refuses to die. Fear, misinformation and ignorance all contribute to fueling this myth around the world. It is a virus most commonly caught by having unprotected sex or by sharing infected needles and other drug injecting equipment. HIV does not discriminate on the basis of an individuals sexuality - Whether you are male or female, gay or heterosexual, young or old, it can still infect you. Although it is true that the first known case of AIDS was amongst the gay community in the early 1980’s, the numbers of heterosexuals becoming infected with HIV continues to rise.

If your son has just come out to you as gay, discuss the issue of safer sex as you would if he was straight - when the moment is right. It depends on how old your old son is and how comfortable you are talking about these issues. It is important they understand what safer sex is and most importantly how to have it. It might be a challenge thinking of your son as a sexual being, but you can’t stop him being sexually active, however much you want to protect him. Education is the key! Educating him on the dangers of unsafe sex, the importance of regular HIV tests, emphasising that he is responsible for his own health and wellbeing and that includes sexual health.

You may not be able to stop your son from having sex but you can help ensure it is safer sex.





## A Mother's Story...

When your child tells you that they are gay it can be a worrying and unsettling time. You worry about the reaction of the other siblings and society in general. You worry about how they will be treated as “fresh meat” in the gay community and you worry that they worry that you worry!

However, for me, the very proud mother of a gay son, and three younger children, calling someone gay as my youngest says, “is not an insult”. I always knew he was gay and so I never made it an “issue” I approached it the same as any other young person maturing into a sexually active young adult, with caution, preparation and awareness.

The day I heard him discussing to a friend what I once told him, I felt I had obviously dealt with it well.

I had informed him that, “I would rather you were sat at the kitchen table with your boyfriend and be happy, than sat there with your wife and kids and be unhappy”.

I was proud that he felt he could be open with me. The way he told me was by dropping it in conversation as he left for college, moments later it sunk in and I text him and said “It’s about time you told me”.

To celebrate him finishing his dissertation and completing his degree we took his Dad gay clubbing! In a nutshell it is not my son’s sexual orientation that concerns me, as long as he treats people, including their partner with respect.

Claire & Son Brandon.





## Summing it all up...

No one ever said that being a parent was easy, and having a LGBT child is no more demanding than having a heterosexual child. Some of the challenges may be diverse but the bond between parent and child will always be unique. The fact that your child has come out to you about their sexuality is a positive giant step in developing an honest and open relationship with you.

Young LGBT+ individuals worry about their peers finding out their sexuality especially whilst still at school due to fear of being bullied and punishment not been dealt out to the bullies if they should report the homophobic bullying to their teachers.

Whilst some young LGBT individuals are out and proud to everyone and may dismiss any negative reactions, there are still plenty of young individuals who have absorbed some of the prejudice and discrimination that still face LGBT individuals today.

Individuals do not choose their sexuality or a gay “lifestyle” but as parents you can choose to listen, understand and accept your child with unconditional love and be proud of who they are.



## **BLAH LGBT+ Youth Project**

Providing support for young LGBT+ people and those questioning their sexuality and gender identity aged 25yrs and under.

For more information about BLAH LGBT+ Youth services and BLAH LGBT+ youth groups please email:

**[blah@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk](mailto:blah@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk)**

Facebook - **BLAH LGBT+ Youth Project**

Phone: **01603 219299**

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## *Parent To Parent*


### **Parent To Parent**

Providing support for parents of LGBT+ individuals, email and phone support is provided as well as 1:1 appointments.

Email: **[parents@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk](mailto:parents@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk)**

Phone: **01603 219299**





Providing support that is relevant to the health and wellbeing needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Norfolk.



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