

# Resource Sheet for Caregivers of LGBTQ Youth

*All information presented in this sheet is paired with its resource. Click the link to find the full article with more information.*

## [FAQ Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center](#)

### **“What do the letters LGBT(QQPIA) mean?”**

This is a handy acronym that summarizes the subcommunities that are marginalized in regards to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. The acronym often stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Pansexual, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic/Agender.

### **What is transgender identity?**

Transgender is an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity is different from the one assigned to them at birth. Transgender individuals may identify as women, men, neither, both, or something else entirely. Some common identities under this umbrella include genderqueer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, agender, Two-Spirit (used by some indigenous Native American communities), trans woman, and trans man. Often, transgender will be shortened to trans.

### **Isn't the word "queer" an insult? How can using "queer" be a sign of pride?**

The word queer has often been used as an insult. Many people in the community have decided to reclaim the word to take away others' power to hurt them. It is also useful as a word that encompasses all identities under the LGBT+ umbrella or to note a political identity. However, you should only call someone queer, if they have indicated that they are okay with that word being used for themselves.

### **Can "conversion therapy" change sexual orientation?**

No. The reality is that same gender attraction is not an illness. It does not require treatment and is not changeable. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the official manual that lists mental and emotional disorders. Two years later, the American Psychological Association resolved to support the removal. Ever since, both associations have urged all mental health professionals to help dispel the stigma of mental illness associated with same gender attraction.

### **Why do some lesbian, gay, bi, and queer people tell people about their sexual orientation?**

They tell about it because sharing that aspect of themselves with others is important to their mental health. In fact, the process of identity development for lesbian, gay, bi, and queer people—called coming out—has been found to be strongly related to psychological adjustment—the more positive the lesbian, gay, bi, or queer identity, the better one's mental health and the higher self-esteem.

**What is cross dressing?**

Cross dressing is the practice of wearing clothing typically associated with a gender different than one's own and is independent of one's sexual orientation. Many individuals who crossdress do not necessarily desire to be a different gender."

## **A Guide for Understanding, Supporting, and Affirming LGBTQI2-S Children, Youth, and Families**

**KEY DEFINITIONS!**

**“Sex:** Genetic and anatomical characteristics with which people are born, typically labeled “male” or “female.” Some individuals are born with a reproductive/sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definitions of male or female. This is sometimes referred to as “intersex.” Many medical and some advocacy communities now use the term “disorder” (or sometimes, “differences”) of sex development (DSD) to distinguish between such medical conditions and a person’s self-label or identity. Not all people who are born with a DSD identify as intersex.

**Sexual orientation:** A person’s emotional, sexual, and/or relational attraction to others. This can include attraction to people of the opposite sex/gender (heterosexual), the same sex/gender (gay/lesbian), or multiple sexes/genders (e.g., bisexual).

**Gender identity:** Our internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Because gender identity is internal, it is not necessarily visible to others. “Cisgender” refers to people whose gender identity/expression does not differ from that typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. For example, a person who was born as male and identifies as a man may be considered cisgender. In contrast, “transgender” describes people whose gender identity/expression is different from that typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. A transgender person “transitions” to express gender identity through various changes. These changes may include wearing clothes and adopting a physical appearance that aligns with their internal sense of gender.

**Gender expression:** The manner in which people represent their gender to others. For example, an individual may express gender through mannerisms, clothes, and personal interests.

**Questioning:** A term used to describe individuals who are unsure about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Two-Spirit:** An inclusive term created specifically by and for Native American communities. It refers to American Indian/Alaskan Native American people who (a) express their gender, sexual orientation, and/or sex/gender roles in indigenous, non-Western ways, using tribal terms and concepts, and/or (b) define themselves as LGBTQI in a native context. Often peoples’ spiritual experiences or cultural beliefs are core to the formation of their two-spirit identity.”

## **BE YOURSELF: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER, AND QUESTIONING YOUTH**

*Use this guide to go over the questions you may have. You can also read through this with your youth to reassure them that the feelings or frustrations they are experiencing are normal.*

### **“When do transgender people know that they are differently gendered?”**

THE SHORT ANSWER: One’s sense of gender happens at different times for different people.

### **Aren’t there only two genders?**

THE SHORT ANSWER: No. While we used to think of gender as binary—masculine/man/male and feminine/woman/female—we have come to learn that gender exists more on a spectrum. This is a new concept in the United States, but many cultures recognize more than two genders and have for a long time.

### **What about “ex-gay” ministries and so-called “conversion therapy—can they help me?**

THE SHORT ANSWER: No. Not only do these measures—like “pray the gay away”—not work, but also they are likely to harm you. Every major mainstream medical, psychiatric, and psychological association has denounced this type of so-called therapy.”

## **Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Teens: Facts for Teens and Their Parents**

### **“A message to parents**

Finding out your son or daughter is gay, lesbian, or bisexual can be difficult. Parents often feel guilty. They ask themselves questions like, “Did I do anything to cause this?” “Should we have done something differently when he was a child?” “Is it my fault?” Questions like these are common, but do not help.

Rejecting your child also is not a good response. It may have been very difficult for your child to come to terms with her or his sexuality. But it could be devastating if you reject her or him at the same time. Your child needs you very much!

So take a deep breath and think. Take a little time to come to grips with your child’s news. You may need to readjust your dreams for your child’s future. You may have to deal with your own negative stereotypes of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. But you must not reject your teenager. He or she is still your child and needs your love and support.

Your teen did not choose to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Accept her or him and be there to help with any problems that arise. Your pediatrician may be able to help you with this new challenge or suggest a referral for counseling. You also may find it helpful to talk with other parents whose children are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.”

## **Gender Identity Development in Children**

*Understanding the identity development of your youth*

### **“What parents can do:**

All children need the opportunity to explore different gender roles and different styles of play. Parents can make sure their young child's environment reflects diversity in gender roles and encourages opportunities for everyone. Some ideas would be to offer:

Children's books or puzzles showing men and women in non-stereotypical and diverse gender roles (stay-at-home dads, working moms, male nurses, and female police officers, for example).

A wide range of toys for your child to choose from, including baby dolls, toy vehicles, action figures, blocks, etc.

By age six, most children spend most of their playtime with members of their own sex and may gravitate towards sports and other activities that are associated with their gender. It is important to allow children to make choices regarding friend groups, sports, and other activities they get involved in. It is also a good idea to check in with your child to learn about their preferences and to make sure they feel included without teasing or bullying.”

## **Family Acceptance Project**

*“This booklet was written for families like yours to help strengthen families and foster families with gay and transgender children and adolescents. And to help you provide support and to decrease your gay or transgender child's risk for serious health and mental health problems in adulthood.”*

“Our research shows that gay and transgender youth who were rejected by their families because of their identity had much lower self-esteem. They had fewer people they could turn to for help. And they were more isolated than youth who were accepted by their families. Gay and transgender teens who were highly rejected by their parents and caregivers were at very high risk for health and mental health problems when they become young adults (ages 21-25). Highly rejected young people were:

- More than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide
- Nearly 6 times as likely to report high levels of depression
- More than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs, and
- More than 3 times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases

compared with gay and transgender young adults who were not at all or only rejected a little by their parents and caregivers – because of their gay or transgender identity”

### **Behaviors to Avoid**

- Hitting, slapping or physically hurting your child because of their LGBT identity
- Verbal harassment or name-calling because of your child's LGBT identity
- Excluding LGBT youth from family and family activities
- Blocking access to LGBT friends, events & resources

- Blaming your child when they are discriminated against because of their LGBT identity
- Pressuring your child to be more (or less) masculine or feminine
- Telling your child that God will punish them because they are gay
- Telling your child that you are ashamed of them or that how they look or act will shame the family
- Making your child keep their LGBT identity a secret in the family and not letting them talk about it

## **Fact sheet LGBT Rights: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Does being around LGBT people or having access to information on homosexuality endanger the well-being of children?**

No. Learning about or spending time with people who are LGBT does not influence the sexual orientation or gender identity of minors nor can it harm their wellbeing. Rather, it is vital that all youth have access to age-appropriate sexuality education to ensure that they have healthy, respectful physical relationships and can protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections. Denial of this kind of information contributes to stigma and can cause young LGBT people to feel isolated, depressed, forcing some to drop out of school and contributing to higher rates of suicide..

### **Is it possible to change a person's sexual orientation and gender identity?**

No. A person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity cannot be changed. What must change are the negative social attitudes that stigmatize LGBT people and contribute to violence and discrimination against them. Attempts to change someone's sexual orientation often involve human rights violations and can cause severe trauma. Examples include forced psychiatric therapies intended to "cure" (sic) individuals of their same-sex attraction, as well as the so-called "corrective" rape of lesbians perpetrated with the declared aim of "turning them straight."

### **What is "sexual orientation"?**

Sexual orientation refers to a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. Everyone has a sexual orientation, which is integral to a person's identity. Gay men and lesbian women are attracted to individuals of the same sex as themselves. Heterosexual people (sometimes known as "straight") are attracted to individuals of a different sex from themselves. Bisexual people may be attracted to individuals of the same or different sex. Sexual orientation is not related to gender identity

### **What is intersex?**

An intersex person is born with sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, and/or chromosome patterns that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. This may be apparent at birth or become so later in life. An intersex person may identify as male or female or as neither. Intersex status is not about sexual orientation or gender identity: intersex people experience the same range of sexual orientations and gender identities as non-intersex people.

### **Are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people dangerous to children?**

No. There is no link between homosexuality and child abuse of any kind. LGBT people all over the world can be good parents, teachers and role models for young people. Portraying LGBT people as “paedophiles” or dangerous to children is wholly inaccurate, offensive and a distraction from the need for serious and appropriate measures to protect all children, including those coming to terms with their sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **Tips for Parents of LGBTQ Youth**

### **“Encourage dialogue**

As you’re likely well aware, getting your kids to open up can feel impossible. Dr. Sanders and Dr. Fields say the best way to do this is to build trust and start small. “Be curious about their life,” advises Dr. Sanders. Get to know their friends and what they like to do. Ask them how their day went and if they learned anything interesting in school. If it’s like pulling teeth at times, don’t be discouraged. Children really do want to be able to talk to parents about what’s going on in their lives.

These conversations may seem like no-brainers, but staying connected to your child’s world makes it easier for them to approach you with bigger, more complex issues, like sexuality. The more you communicate with your child, the more comfortable they’ll feel.

### **How to Get Them Talking**

You can’t always rely on your children to initiate these exchanges, though. When you feel something needs to be discussed, try being less direct. “Adolescents often have a hard time talking about themselves. Instead, bring up their friends or characters you encounter while watching age-appropriate movies or television together,” suggests Dr. Sanders.

Today’s media provide plenty of teachable moments for parents to seize. While it may seem less personal, it is an opportunity to broach sensitive topics in a way that’s not so scary. For instance, if a movie has a bisexual character, spark a conversation by saying, “The character in this show is attracted to boys and girls. That’s OK with me. What do you think?”

## **The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students**

*Although this article is for those in education, all of the resources can be translated over in your home.*

### **What is an Ally?**

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against or treated unfairly. For the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, an ally is any person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people. Allies have been involved in almost all movements for social change, and allies can make a significant contribution to the LGBT rights movement. It is important for

allies to demonstrate that LGBT people are not alone as they work to improve school climate, and to take a stand in places where it might not be safe for LGBT people to be out or visible.

### **LGBTQ+ Support Organizations:**

For resources by state, visit <https://pflagnation.al/stateyouthresources>

#### **Advocates For Youth**

[Advocatesforyouth.org](http://Advocatesforyouth.org)

(202) 419-3420

#### **Ali Forney Center**

[Aliforneycenter.org](http://Aliforneycenter.org)

(212) 222-3427

#### **Bisexual Resource Center**

[biresource.net](http://biresource.net)

(617) 424-9595

#### **COLAGE A program of Family Equality**

[colage.org](http://colage.org)

(415) 861-5437

#### **Family Equality**

[familyequality.org](http://familyequality.org)

(617) 502-8700

#### **GLSEN**

[glsen.org](http://glsen.org)

(212) 727-0135

#### **Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network)**

[gsanetwork.org](http://gsanetwork.org)

(415) 552-4229

#### **GLAAD**

[glaad.org](http://glaad.org)

(323) 933-2240

#### **Human Rights Campaign (HRC)**

[hrc.org](http://hrc.org)

(202) 628-4160

#### **It Gets Better**

[itgetsbetter.org](http://itgetsbetter.org)

**Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund**

[lambdalegal.org](http://lambdalegal.org)

(212) 809-8585

**Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)**

[lyric.org](http://lyric.org)

(415) 703-6150

**National Black Justice Coalition**

[nbjc.org](http://nbjc.org)

(202) 319-1552

**National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)**

[nclrights.org](http://nclrights.org)

(415) 392-6257