



Some tips excerpted from Mariana Caplan's book, *When Holidays are Hell...! A Guide to Surviving Family Gatherings*, published by Hohm Press (Prescott, AZ, 1997). 1.800.381.2700

# TIPS FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY

## If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

**Don't assume** you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised.

**Realize** that your family's reaction to you may **not** be because you are GLBT. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.

**Remember** that "coming out" is a continuous process. You may have to "come out" many times.

**Don't wait** for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday.

**Recognize** that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a GLBT child. It took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn.

**Let your family's judgments** be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.

If it is too difficult to be with your family, **create your own holiday gathering** with friends and loved ones.

If you are transgender, **be gentle** with your family's pronoun "slips." Let them know you know how difficult it is.

## Before the visit...

**Make a decision** about being "out" to each family member before you visit.

If you are partnered, **Discuss in advance** how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.

If you bring your partner home, **don't wait until late** into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.

**Have alternate plans** if the situation becomes difficult at home.

**Find out** about local GLBT resources.

**If you do plan to "come out"** to your family over the holidays, have support available, including PFLAG publications and the number of a local PFLAG chapter.

## During the visit...

**Focus** on common interests.

**Reassure** family members that you are still the same person they have always known.

If you are partnered, **be sensitive** to his or her needs as well as your own.

**Be wary** of the possible desire to shock your family.

**Remember to affirm yourself.**

**Realize** that you don't need your family's approval.

**Connect with someone else who is GLBT**—by phone or in person—who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.



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## If you are the friend or family member of someone gay...

**Set up support for yourself.** It is important to realize you are not alone. Find the phone number of the nearest Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) chapter.

**Take your time.** Acceptance may not come instantly, but be honest about your feelings.

**Don't be nervous** about using the "correct" language. Honesty and openness creates warmth, sincerity and a deeper bond in a relationship. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask for help.

**Realize** that the situation may be as difficult and awkward for your GLBT loved one as it is for you.

## Before the visit...

**Practice in advance** if you are going to be discussing your family member's sexual orientation or gender identity with family and friends. If you are comfortable talking about it, your family and friends will probably be more comfortable too.

**Anticipate** potential problems, but do not assume the reactions will always be what you expected.

**Consult** with your GLBT loved one when coordinating sleeping arrangements if he or she is bringing home a partner.

If your family member is transgender, **practice** using the correct pronouns.

## During the visit...

**Treat a GLBT person** like you would treat anyone else in your family.

**Take interest** in your family member's life. He or she is still the same person.

**Don't ask** your GLBT family member to act a certain way. Let them be their natural selves.

If your GLBT family member is bringing a partner, **acknowledge** them as you would any other family member's partner.

If your GLBT family member is bringing a partner, **include** them in your family traditions.

**Ask your GLBT family member** about his or her partner if you know they have one.



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