



Be Yourself

Questions & Answers for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are complex issues, and figuring it out can be difficult and confusing for anyone. As a young person, coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) can be especially complicated—and fraught with questions.

You are at a time in your life when you are becoming an adult, yet you might not yet have adult rights. Your relationship with your parents, guardians, or family is changing. You're becoming more independent, and they are having to accept that you're not their little child any more. That's not easy for either of you. And all of a sudden, something you didn't think about a few years ago—sex—might feel like the most important thing in the world.

If you are, or think you might be, an LGBTQ teen, sex, attraction and relationships might be even more confusing. Growing up, your friends and family may have talked about dating, falling in love and getting married. But they probably never talked about if you grow up and fall in love with a person of a different gender, or what it would be like to feel that your physical sex doesn't match up with how you feel inside. In your family, school faith community, or elsewhere you may have heard words like "queer," "fag," or "tranny" used as an insult... or witnessed—or experienced—harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

Popular culture is still dominated by heterosexual and cisgender images: Television, films, magazines and social media mostly show straight, cisgender couples together; most music talks about straight couples falling in love. If you're a guy, your friends are probably talking about girls, and if you're a girl, they're talking about guys. And, while most people your age seem to fit neatly into expected gender roles, you may feel you don't – or don't want to. All of that makes things hard if you're LGBT – or think you might be – because you don't have much that relates to you.

We are here to let you know three things above all else:

One: It is okay to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning—or any other sexual orientation or gender identity that works for you.

Being LGBTQ is as much a human variation as being left handed. Your sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are just a part of who you are.

Two: It takes time to know who you are.

It's OK to be confused; it's OK to be unsure if you're LGBTQ, and it's OK to take your time finding out. There's no need to rush.

Three: You're not alone.

Right now, there are tens of thousands of other youth, all thinking they're LGBT or wondering if they are, all wondering if they're the only one, all trying to find someone to talk to about it. Hundreds of thousands more, however, have already traveled that road. One of them or another helpful person will be on the other end of the line if you call any Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) support line or email any PFLAG chapter.

To learn more about common questions and answers for LGBTQ youth and young adults check out the full-length publication *Be Yourself*, which can be found on the PFLAG National website at pflag.org/beyourself.