



# Our Children

## Questions & Answers for Families of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender-Expansive, and Queer Youth

*“My mother’s last words to me were that of acceptance and love at a time I was filled with fear and hate of the world. My mother will always have the best place in my heart for giving me that gift.”*

*— Christopher M., 29, Washington, D.C.*

As parents and family members, we work to ensure that our kids are safe, happy, and successful. When they are young, we dream about their future. We encourage them to finish school, find love, get married, and have our grandchildren. When we have a child who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender-expansive, or queer (LGBTQ+) it’s common to feel that those dreams might not be possible. Some are taught that being LGBTQ+ is different, wrong or, in the case of families of faith, sinful.

**What’s the first thing you can do when you learn that your child is LGBTQ+ or questioning if they might be?** Seek support from others. Families all across the country and in your community have LGBTQ+ people in their immediate or extended families. **You are not alone.** Talking about it to someone can really help—and that’s where PFLAG comes in. PFLAG, as the first and largest organization for parents, families, and allies of LGBTQ+ people, has been doing this work for nearly 50 years, and its 400+ chapters across the country have provided peer-to-peer support and crucial education opportunities to all kinds of families. Find a chapter near you at [pflag.org/find](http://pflag.org/find).

Coming out can be a difficult process. Regardless of how nurturing you are with your kids, they might feel a real risk of losing love and support by coming out. Every day, young people are kicked out of their home for disclosing their sexuality or gender. By the time a child has built up the courage to come out, they have likely begun a process of self acceptance. Telling you is a sign of love, and desire for an open and honest relationship—your support can strongly reinforce their own process of self acceptance.

**Is my child different now?** We think we know and understand our children from the day they are born. So when a child reveals their authentic selves, and we hadn’t a clue—or we were pretty sure we knew but possibly denied it to ourselves—the reaction can range from surprise to worry, or possibly joy and support almost immediately; in some cases it’s a variety of responses simultaneously. **All of these emotions—and others—are normal and ok.**

The reality is that our world comes from a place of assumption that everyone we encounter and interact with is straight (also known as heteronormativity) and cisgender (not transgender), also known as cisnormativity. Your dreams for your loved ones are likely this way, too. Despite the fact that a significant portion of the population is LGBTQ+, society still assumes everyone is straight or cisgender as a baseline... when the truth is actually quite different. Of course, when you stop to think about it, whether our kids are straight, bisexual, gay, cisgender, transgender, or gender expansive, they’re always surprising us. They don’t marry who we might pick for them; they don’t take the job we would have chosen; they don’t live where we’d like them to live.

Keep reminding yourself that your child hasn’t changed. Your child is the same person that they were before you learned about their sexuality or gender. It is your dream, your expectations, and your vision that may have to change if you are to really know and understand your LGBTQ+ loved one.

For an in-depth exploration of these issues, be sure to order the full publication *OUR CHILDREN*, or download a copy for free, both from [pflag.org/ourchildren](http://pflag.org/ourchildren). And if you have questions, please contact us at [info@pflag.org](mailto:info@pflag.org).

***PFLAG is here for you!***