

PARENTS

I THINK MY CHILD IS GAY.

Information for Parents of Gay Lesbian Bisexual or Transgender Young People.

Your child may have recently told you that they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT). The fact that they have told you reflects their trust in you and the importance of their relationship with you. Your love and support are incredibly important for the happiness and wellbeing of your child.

For many parents the fact that their child is LGBT is no big deal. Some parents may have mixed emotions and many questions they need answered. You may need to give yourself time to get used to this new knowledge. Remember that you are not alone and there are supports available for you, as well as for your child.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER?

Sexual orientation is about who we are attracted to, physically and emotionally. People who are attracted to people of the opposite sex are Heterosexual; People who are attracted to people of the same sex are Lesbian or Gay and People who are attracted to people of either sex are Bisexual.

Gender Identity is our internal feelings of being a man or woman. Gender Expression is about how we show our identity to the world (e.g. clothes, hair-style, mannerisms). Transgender is the umbrella term used for anyone whose Gender Identity or Gender Expression doesn't always match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Remember that this is not a 'lifestyle choice'; this is the nature of your child. Your child's sexual orientation or gender identity is inherent and nothing you did, or didn't do, made them LGBT. You can't make someone be different to who they are meant to be, but you can support them and help them to accept themselves for who they are. The most common age that young people know they are LGBT is when they are 12. Try not to tell your child that they are too young to know.

PARENTS

YOU THINK YOUR CHILD MAY BE LGBT

You may be reading this leaflet because you think your child might be LGBT, but they haven't talked to you about it yet. You may be wondering how to raise the subject with your child.

Your child may not yet be aware of their sexual orientation / gender identity, or they may be having difficulties accepting it and coming to terms with it. Some LGBT young people do not tell their parents because they fear rejection. Some may hope that it will just go away and that they won't need to tell anyone.

Some children may feel insulted and upset if you raise the suggestion that they are LGBT. Approaching the subject indirectly may be a good way to start. You could begin by talking to your child about relationships. Try to emphasise that you want them to be happy and secure and that you will always support them no matter what.

If you can show that you are relaxed about talking about sexuality / gender identity, then your child may be more likely to talk to you about how they are feeling.

Remember it is really important to let your child know that you will always love and support them, no matter who they are.

PARENTS

WHY DID MY CHILD TELL ME THEY ARE LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL/TRANSGENDER?

Children tell their parents in order to remove hidden barriers and to be accepted for who they are.

You may wish they never told you. Try to put yourself in your child's shoes. Imagine how you would feel, if you were unable to talk about who you are, who you are attracted to, how you feel about a certain person, or even where or with whom you socialise. To live a lie and ignore your sexuality / gender identity, such an integral part of you, is emotionally damaging, and isolating. Try to give yourself time to come to terms with this news. It has taken your child some time to come to terms with their sexuality / gender identity, so naturally it will take you time to come to terms with it too.

"We just needed time to get used to the idea. What a fool I would have been to lose that precious son of mine."

TELLING OTHER PEOPLE

You don't have to tell anyone. The choice is entirely yours and your child's. If you do want to tell other people it is important you talk with your child about this first. By telling another person about your child's sexuality / gender identity, you are automatically 'outing' them to that person, and you may have no way of judging the reaction. Your child may wish to inform other people themselves in their own time, or they may prefer you to do this for them, but always consult with your child before telling anyone.

Over time you will learn to become more and more comfortable in talking to others about your child's identity. The more you learn to speak with confidence and pride about your child, the easier it will be for others to respond positively to them. People look to you, as the child's parents, for their lead in how to respond or react. If you are positive and secure in your support of your child, it will encourage others to also be positive and respectful of your child.

PARENTS

WILL MY CHILD BE BULLIED BECAUSE THEY ARE LGBT?

We live in a world where some people still have some negative attitudes about LGBT people. This can be very difficult and hurtful for LGBT people. Some LGBT young people do experience homophobic bullying. This is unacceptable and your support is very important. Talk with your child, let them know that you support them and will not tolerate the bullying. Discuss the bullying with your child's teacher / principal / youth worker and ask them to take action to stop the bullying. Schools and Youth Services have a legal obligation to protect all the young people and to ensure that no one is bullied or harassed because of their sexual orientation / gender identity.

Your child will be better able to deal with any difficulties they may encounter if they know they have you on their side.

This leaflet has been funded as a co-branding partnership with the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention



BeLonG To : Youth Service for
Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Young People in Ireland
Parliament House, 13 Parliament Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. Tel. 01 670 6223.
www.belongto.org / info@belongto.org

AN INFORMATION BOOKLET LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER FOR PARENTS

