

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD(REN)

– about LGBTQ+ –

TERMS:

- **LGBTQ+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, and (+) others who identify as members of the sexual minority community.
 - LESBIAN – a female attracted to other females
 - GAY – a male attracted to other males (Gay is also a general term to describe individuals who are not 'straight', regardless of gender)
 - BISEXUAL – an individual who is attracted to males and females
 - TRANSGENDER – individuals whose gender identity doesn't match the gender they were assigned at birth
 - QUEER – a general term for all sexual minority individuals
 - QUESTIONING – individuals who are still in the process of determining one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity /
 - '+' – others whose identity places them within the sexual minority community
- **SOGIE:** Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity & Expression
- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** The element of self that identifies who one is sexually attracted to.
- **GENDER IDENTITY:** The element of self that determines one's gender, aside from the gender that was assigned at birth.
- **COMING OUT:** Publicly declaring one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The first thing a parent or guardian can do to help their child is to accept that their child will travel their own unique self-identification journey, similar to theirs, but not necessarily the same, or resulting in the same outcome. Encourage children to be authentic in discovering themselves, assuring them of your support.

DISCOVERING ONESELF AS AN INDIVIDUAL IS VERY PERSONAL...

and one of the most miraculous journeys that each of us will experience in life. Everyone is unique and there is no one like your child!

Two elements that help to define each of us are our Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity & Expression of self, or SOGIE. **Every person has a SOGIE!**

If one's sexual orientation is anything but 'straight' (being of one gender and exclusively being attracted to a person of a differing gender), then that person most likely falls into the LGBTQ category.

If one's gender identity is anything but 'cisgender' (identifying as female, the same gender you were assigned at birth, or identifying as male, the same gender you were assigned at birth), then the individual most likely falls into a gender variant category, such as transgender (feeling male even though you were assigned female at birth, or feeling female even though you were assigned male at birth), for example.

Regardless of one's SOGIE, all of us are created to be exactly who we have discovered ourselves to be. There is no shame in being true to yourself. Discard the negative input and opinions of others, avoid negative and/or toxic people, and surround yourself with loving individuals who see the beauty of nurturing a loving relationship with your child as you support them on their unique journey. Continue to be the loving, supportive parent your child believes you to be.



Equality Downers Grove
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Creating an accepting and equitable environment for LGBTQ++ people through education, support, social action, and advocacy.

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TO HELP their child is to accept that their child will travel their own unique self-identification journey, similar to theirs, but not necessarily the same, or resulting in the same outcome. Encourage children to be authentic in discovering themselves, assuring them of your support.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT your child just as he or she is by using inclusive language when you talk about individuals, and by responding positively to presenting LGBTQ+ persons or issues. Assure your child that you accept these individuals as valued persons with a narrative that differs from your own. Celebrate diversity in your language, attitude, and actions (take your child to a gay pride event, for example).

IF YOU SUSPECT that your child identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, it is best to allow your child to come out to you when they are ready. Your child is more likely to do this if you do as the previous paragraph suggests. Show your child unconditional love and support and they will learn to trust that it is safe to confide in you.

HOWEVER YOUR CHILD IDENTIFIES, believe them, even though this label may change over time as your child comes to better understand who they are, and becomes increasingly more comfortable with that awareness. Avoid asking your child, "How do you know?" After all, how did you know? Most likely, you didn't have to 'experiment' before knowing who you truly are.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS SHARED that they identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, they have taken a risk to be openly honest with you about who they have discovered themselves to be. Your child is seeking your support in pursuing

greater freedom to be who they are and, in the process, minimizing the emotional stress of hiding one's true identity.

IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST of you and your child to minimize your own surprised or negative initial reaction to your child's disclosure. This may seem to come out of the blue. Your child has most likely become aware of who they are over a lengthy time period, and as a result, they have had time to accept themselves. You may be surprised hearing the news for the first time. Be aware of reacting in less than supportive ways. Give yourself time to accept the truth. Assure your child that this doesn't change the relationship you have enjoyed with one another, and that you desire to get to know them better than you did before. Be patient, honest, and loving with them and yourself. The more you display these gracious attributes, the healthier and more productive your parental influence will be.

IT CAN BE A CHALLENGE IN LEARNING THAT YOUR CHILD IS LGBTQ+...

Remember that assistance is always available. There are all types of resources online about LGBTQ+ topics along with tips on how to successfully support, nurture, and assist your child as they claim their authenticity. Explore whether your child's school has a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance or Gender Sexuality Alliance), or perhaps there is a **YOUTH OUTLOOK** group that meets in your area. Encourage your child to engage in these LGBTQ+ affirming communities. Youth Outlook also runs support groups for Parents/Guardians of LGBTQ youth, just as PFLAG (Parents, Family/Friends of Lesbians and Gays) does. Take advantage of the resources that are available to you.