

TALKING TO YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

– for LGBTQ+ Youth –

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.

Regardless of your SOGIE, you were created to be exactly who you have discovered yourself to be. There is no shame in being you. Discard negative feedback and opinions, avoid negative and/or toxic people, and surround yourself with loving individuals who see the beauty of YOU, including the gift of your SOGIE!

IF YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS RESPOND IN A LOVING AND ACCEPTING MANNER...

relax into being you and enjoy the journey of getting to know one another, more fully and more authentically. Freely express your appreciation for their unconditional love and support. Continue to seek out their gentle guidance regarding any adolescent issues, even if they are uncomfortable topics. After all, our parents are typically our number one allies and will best support you through life's challenges.

IF YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS RESPOND IN A NEGATIVE, UNACCEPTING MANNER...

the best response would be to apologize for the challenge this might present, but don't apologize for being you. Assure them that if and when they would like to further discuss what you have shared, you are willing and able, only if the discussion will be calm, kind, and healthy. Until they request to speak with you regarding this topic in a kind, loving manner, avoid the topic and continue to express yourself authentically in environments that are loving and accepting.

There are all types of resources online about these topics, along with tips on how to successfully 'come out'. There are also places to go for in-person support as well. Perhaps your school has a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance or Gender Sexuality Alliance), or perhaps there is a Youth Outlook group that meets in your area. Take advantage of the resources that are available to you.

DISCOVERING ONESELF as an individual is very personal, and one of the most miraculous journeys that each of us will experience in life. There is no other person like you!

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! **Whatever your SOGIE**, you are uniquely you, valued, important, and blessed.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS about talking to Parents/Guardians if you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

- Remember that in our society, most everyone is assumed to be straight and cisgender, unless YOU declare that you are not. If you are blessed to be LGBTQ+, then revealing your sexual orientation and/or gender identity is your choice.
- If you depend on others for your care (shelter – place to live, food, clothing, safety, love, etc.), think carefully about whether or not there is a risk in losing this support in response to how you identify. You don't want to create greater hardship for yourself at a time in your life when being independent of your parents/guardians/household is not possible.
- If you are not sure if there is a risk in telling your parents/guardians, explore their beliefs by bringing up LGBTQ+ individuals on TV, in a film, or at school. See how your parents respond to others who identify as LGBTQ+. If your parents are extremely negative or hostile in their response, it may be in your best interest to hold off in claiming your true identity at this time.
- If your parents ask you if you are LGBTQ+, it is always the better choice to be honest. If they are asking at a stressful time, or in a heated, confrontational

manner, respond by requesting that this topic be discussed at another time, when hearts and minds are calm and rational.

WHEN YOU CHOOSE to come out, or tell others about your LGBTQ+ identification, don't be discouraged by negative reactions from others. Remember, you have become aware of who you are over a lengthy period of time, and as a result, you have had time to accept yourself. When someone else hears the news for the first time, they may be surprised and react in less than supportive ways. Give them time, like you had, to accept the truth. Assure them that this doesn't change the relationship you have enjoyed with one another, and that you desire to assist them in getting to know you better than they did before. Be patient, honest, and loving. The more you display these gracious attributes, the healthier and more productive your influence on their acceptance of you will be.

IN A CISGENDER, HETEROSEXIST WORLD, it isn't always easy in owning one's own LGBTQ+ identity, let alone to expect others to accept you authentically, so remember there is always assistance available. If you desire support, seek out close friends, a teacher, school counselors, a trusted neighbor, or anyone who has shown you that they care for you unconditionally.



Equality Downers Grove
contact@eqdg.org
EQDG.org

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