

COMING OUT **A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

Supporting your lesbian, gay,
bisexual or transgender child.

Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual &
Trans Young People in Ireland

belong¹⁰

Whether someone in your family has come out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+), or you think your child may be LGBT+, you have come to the right place.

We know that it can be tough on a parent when their child comes out. Your child has probably come to terms with their sexual orientation or gender identity and felt comfortable enough about it to 'come out' to you. Now it's your turn to deal with this in the best way that you can.

Give yourself time to come to terms with the new situation. While you do this, be mindful that your child needs your support now more than ever. Take time to consider what you say and how this might impact on your child emotionally.

Remember that this is not a 'lifestyle choice'. 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.

HELPFUL TERMS

Lesbian: a woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay: someone who is mainly attracted to people of the same gender.

Bisexual: someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

Transgender: someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth.

Non-binary/genderqueer: someone who does not see gender in a binary way, and may identify as a combination of male and female, or as being beyond gender.

+: you will often see a + after LGBT, this stands for inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Not everyone falls under one of the labels above. It's important to respect whatever label your child chooses to identify with, or if they have no label.

Sexual orientation: sexual and romantic attraction.

Gender identity: our deeply felt internal experience of our own gender.

WHAT TO SAY:

I love you, no matter what.

Tell me more, I want to understand.

I'm so glad you told me!

How can I support you?

What do you need?

Do you have any friends you can also talk to about this?

How are you feeling?

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

It's probably just a phase.

Why are you telling me this?

What did I do wrong?

Does this mean you will never have children?

Please don't tell anyone else.

I don't want to know you anymore.

This is against our religion.

You're too young to know.

You don't look gay.

What will people think?

Your life is going to be so much harder now.

I can't believe you would do this to me.

How do gay people have sex?

What took you so long to realise?

It's not a big deal, why are even worried about this?

I am so disappointed in you.

I THINK MY CHILD IS LGBT+

You may think that your child is LGBT+, but because they have not talked about it themselves, you don't know how to bring it up.

For many reasons LGBT+ young people may not tell anyone about how they are feeling. They may not be aware of their own sexual orientation or gender identity and, if they are, they may be having difficulties in coming to terms with it. Some young people may not tell their parents for fear of rejection. Others may feel, and even hope that "it is just a phase", or "it will pass", and therefore that there is no need to tell anyone.

Some children may feel insulted and upset if you raise the suggestion that they are LGBT+. Approaching the subject indirectly can be a good way to start. You could begin by talking to your child about sex and relationships. Speak positively about being LGBT+ and show that you are accepting. Emphasise that you want your child to be happy and secure, and that you will always love and support them no matter what.

If you can show that you are at ease with your child talking about sexuality, and that you are open to and aware about LGBT+ identities, then your child may be more likely to talk to you about how they are feeling when they are ready.

SUPPORTING YOURSELF

When your child comes out as LGBT+, it is normal to experience mixed emotions. Some parents feel a sense of loss that the person they knew so well seems to have changed, others worry for their child's future or safety or what neighbours and other family members will think.

You are not alone in this experience. These are common feelings of parents who have learned that their child is LGBT+.

You are here because you want to support your child. But you also need to support yourself.

There are a number of parent support groups nationwide where you can talk to other parents of LGBT+ children. You can share your thoughts and feelings and learn how they have supported themselves, and their child or children.

LOOK (Loving Our Out Kids)

LOOK is a support group for the parents of LGBT+ youth. They meet monthly at BeLoNG To (13 Parliament St, Dublin 2). Visit www.lovingouroutkids.org for more information.

You will find a list of parent's support groups nationwide on our website www.belongto.org

No matter where you are in this journey, remember that it is a process and we are with you.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Coming out is a process that the entire family shares with your LGBT+ child. Parents play an important role in supporting a child who has come out. At BeLonG To Youth Services, we can help you to support that important young person in your life, during a time that can be challenging.

LGBT+ Youth Groups

To begin, we suggest that you connect your child with one of our LGBT+ Youth Groups nationwide. Here your child can meet other LGBT+ youth, talk about their experiences, and have some fun. All of our Youth Groups are facilitated by experienced Youth Workers who can support your child around their gender identity and sexual orientation. Find a full list of our Youth Groups on www.belongto.org

Support Services

Our Monday Chats service is a confidential space for LGBT+ young people to share questions, worries or just have a chat with one of our experienced Youth Workers. As a parent, you are welcome to accompany your child or book them in to visit the free, confidential service. The service is for 14-23 year olds and takes place every Monday.

LGBT+ Counselling

Working with Pieta House, we provide a free counselling service in Dublin city centre for LGBT+ young people aged 14-23. Our qualified Psychotherapist offers a safe, non-judgemental space for LGBT+ young people to work through whatever is worrying them.

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Please feel free to get in touch if you have any questions, concerns or want to engage with our support services.



BeLong To Youth Services

13 Parliament St, Dublin 2

www.belongto.org | info@belongto.org | 01 670 6223

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