

# Home for the Holidays: Tips For A Happy Holiday

Revised Edition

Some tips based on Mariana Caplan's book *When Holidays are Hell...! A Guide to Surviving Family Gatherings*.

## **If you are the family member or friend of someone LGBTQ+...**

1. Set up support for yourself. It is important to realize you are not alone. Find the contact information of the nearest PFLAG chapter.
2. Take your time. Acceptance may not come instantly, but be honest about your feelings.
3. Don't be nervous about using the "correct" language. Honesty and openness creates warmth, sincerity and a deeper bond in a relationship. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask for help.
4. Realize that the situation may be as difficult and awkward for your LGBTQ+ loved one as it is for you.

## **Before the visit...**

1. Practice in advance if you are going to be discussing your family member's identity with family and friends. If you are comfortable talking about it, your family and friends will probably be more comfortable too.
2. Anticipate potential problems, but do not assume the reactions will always be what you expected.
3. Consult with your LGBTQ+ loved one when coordinating sleeping arrangements if they are bringing anyone with them.
4. Have resources available, such as a PFLAG publication and contact information available that you can give out in case other family or friends have questions or need support.

## **During the visit...**

1. Treat your LGBTQ+ person like you would treat anyone else in your family.
2. Take interest in your family member's life. They are still the same person.
3. Don't ask your LGBTQ+ family member to act a certain way. Let them be their natural selves.
4. Acknowledge your LGBTQ+ family member's partner(s) as you would any other family member's partner.
5. Include your LGBTQ+ family member's partner(s) in your family traditions.
6. Ask your LGBTQ+ family member about their partner if you know they have one and are comfortable talking about them.
7. Connect with someone (a friend or spouse) with whom you can talk openly about your concerns or feelings.

**If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender...**

1. Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity – you may be surprised and stress yourself out for no reason.
2. Realize that your family's reaction to you may not be because you are LGBTQ+. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
3. Remember that coming out is a continuous process. You may have to come out many times.
4. Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a holiday event for yourself.
5. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a LGBTQ+ child. It took you time to come to terms with your identity, now it is your family's turn.
6. Let your family's judgments be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
7. Create your own holiday gathering with friends and loved ones, if it is too difficult to be with your family.

**Before the visit...**

1. Make a decision about whether to be out to each family member before you visit.
2. Discuss in advance with any partner(s) how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
3. Don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. If you bring any partner(s) with you, make plans in advance.
4. Have alternate plans, include lodging, in case the situation becomes difficult.
5. Find out about LGBTQ+ resources local to your gathering location and/or family members.
6. If you do plan to come out to your family over the holidays, have support available, such as a PFLAG publication and contact information of a local PFLAG chapter.

**During the visit...**

1. Focus on common interests.
2. Reassure family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
3. Be sensitive to your partner(s)'s needs as well as your own.
4. Be wary of the possible desire to shock your family. Revelations seen as attempting to shock may not be taken seriously or may cause more negative reactions than under calmer conditions.
5. Remember to affirm yourself.
6. Realize that you don't need your family's approval to sustain an excellent relationship with your partner(s).
7. Connect with someone else who is LGBTQ+ - by phone, email, or in person – who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.