



My Child is GAY! Now What Do I Do?

Excerpt from Article by Scott Bidstrup

What is happening to me? And to my Child?

What's happening is that you're finding out something very important about who your child is, and your child has revealed something very important to you about who he or she is. This can be a shattering experience for a parent, or it can be a growing experience. It depends on you.

There are some definite stages to the process you have embarked upon, whether willingly or not. They involve learning and growing. Sometimes it will be painful, sometimes joyful. What you get out of it depends on what you're willing to put into it, and how open you can hold your mind.

Some parents hold their prejudices more dearly than their children and actually reject their children outright, and simply disown them and throw them out on the street. You probably haven't done that, or you wouldn't be reading this. Right there, that puts you statistically ahead of fully one fourth of parents of gay children.

Why did my child have to tell me?

Your child wants to be honest with you. Trying to pretend to be something he or she is not, is a tremendous burden, one that carries with it a great deal of guilt and shame. You've tried to teach your child honesty, and now your child has shown that he or she loves you enough to be honest with you about who he or she is, even at great personal risk of rejection. In making this revelation, your child has lifted a great burden of guilt and shame from his or her shoulders, and you need to understand what a great relief it is to not have to lie about who you are.

As a parent, you doubtlessly value honesty in your child a great deal. It is a mark of his or her character. And the fact that your child has entrusted you with this information is an indication that your efforts in teaching him or her honesty and integrity have paid off.

While this is undeniably a great burden for you, it is also an opportunity. The opportunity lies in the fact that you now know your child better than you ever did, and so this situation affords you the opportunity to get closer to your child than you have ever been. If you can be honest with your child about your own feelings, and how you love him or her in spite of this revelation, you can use this situation to draw closer to your child and become more important to him or her than you have ever been. Isn't this what you want as a parent?

Is it my fault?

Wondering if you did something wrong? Wondering if there is something you didn't do right? Why has this happened to you? Don't feel guilty. You didn't do anything wrong. Chances are you're a wonderful parent, and your gay child is going to be a wonderful adult like yourself. Your gay or transgendered child isn't that way because of anything you did, nor anything anyone else did, for that matter.

As science learns more about the origins of homosexuality and transgenderism, it is becoming increasingly clear that these orientations have their origins very early in life. Most gay men and a large number of lesbians will tell you that they knew early in life -- in some cases, awareness of being "different" are among the earliest memories. Some evidence even indicates prenatal influences, even genetic patterns are involved.

The old claim by psychologists that homosexuality indicates a weak father and a domineering mother have long since been disproven by study after study. The only psychologists that still maintain such positions are those who have a hidden agenda -- usually a religious agenda, or a deeply homophobic attitude. Objective science has long since abandoned the idea that parenting styles has any significant influence on homosexual or transgendered orientations.

The most important emotional contribution any parent can make to their children's lives is to love them. Like most parents, you've done that, and continue to do so, or you wouldn't be here reading this. And now that you know about

your child's orientation, they need your love and support more than ever. That's what this web page is all about -- helping you love your child and giving him or her the support he or she needs.

Who recruited my kid?

Nobody. Your child was gay from a surprisingly young age, and never made a conscious choice to be gay, so no-one could have recruited him or her. It is impossible for anyone to recruit anybody to "be gay." The reason for this is simple -- being gay isn't a choice anyone consciously makes. It's tempting to go looking for scapegoats. This is a deeply emotional issue for parents, and one that brings out all the protective instincts in good parents.

Dr. Jack Weinberg, president of the American Psychiatric Association, said in a public statement on October 6, 1977, that fears of "catching" homosexuality or being "recruited" at school or elsewhere are "... utterly without scientific foundation." Stop and ask yourself -- when did you make a conscious decision to be heterosexual? To be attracted to only persons of the opposite sex? Of course you never did.

Can you pick and choose who excites you physically? Of course you can't. And neither can your child. Since he or she can't consciously decide who to be attracted to, being told that attractions to the same sex are wrong or evil can really be painful, because he or she can't prevent those feelings. They just happen. Over time, that guilt, fear and anger can build to create depression to the point of suicide. As a parent, you need to be sensitive to the feelings.

Your child is gay not because of anything you or anyone else did. While science can't explain precisely what causes homosexuality, leading researchers in the field have shown that both genetics and environmental influences play a part (see the bibliography section for more information).

Should we tell the family? What about the neighbors?

The decision to tell anyone else really belongs with your child. He or she has an enormous investment in many relationships that could be damaged or destroyed by such revelations, and for his or her own psychological well-being, it is important for him or her to be in control of who is told. This is often difficult for a parent to realize, but it can often be extremely difficult for a child to tell someone he or she has known most or all of his or her life about such matters, when the very real chance exists that the person being told will reject him or her and refuse any further contact.

Another consideration is the fact that the child may have more experience in dealing with the issue of prejudice and discrimination than you may realize. He or she may have been out to trusted friends for years before you were told. And in so doing, your child may have learned far more about how to handle this kind of revelation than you may suspect. You cannot make your child be honest, particularly when the consequences can be as devastating as outright rejection. Your child will grow far stronger morally if he or she does this on his or her own, or you make the revelation with his or her permission, than if you simply tell others without asking.

I'm desperate to talk to somebody! When will I stop feeling so shaky?

You're in luck! There is a wonderful, loving support organization for people in just your situation, and there's most likely a chapter near you. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, known as PFLAG, is an organization that was put together by parents who have been through what you are going through, for the purpose of supporting parents and family members in just your situation. There's no substitute for talking things over with a parent whose been there before you. PFLAG will go a long way towards easing your fears and addressing your concerns. Give it a try!

Coming out is not an event but a process that's different for every family. You have embarked on a momentous journey to acceptance. With the help of the understanding parents in PFLAG, you will eventually embrace your gay child in love. You can connect with the PFLAG Greater Providence Chapter on our website at www.pflagprovidence.org, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PFLAGGreaterProvidence,RI and on Twitter www.Twitter.com/pflagprovri. You can also phone our helpline at (401) 307-1802.
