

Be honest with your kids, let them know that you are struggling to understand, but they need to know that you still love and care for them.

### Many Fathers Feel:

- Shame, hurt pride and feel they can't brag about their son
- Feel less of a man because their son is gay
- Blame others because it can't be their fault

### What we need to know about being gay or lesbian:

- Gay men are not child molesters. 95% of child molestation is caused by straight men, often married or in de facto relationships.
- They are not mentally ill
- A relationship with the opposite sex will not change a homosexual orientation
- Homosexuality is not a phase
- Most gay men are not interested in wearing women's clothes
- Lesbians do not hate men
- Men having sex with lesbians will not make them straight.

As parents we need to know that for them to tell us they are gay or lesbian, regardless of culture or race is the hardest thing they will ever have to do. They know at minimum they are disappointing family and at worst they know family and community may reject them, leaving them homeless.

## PFLAGParents & Friends of Lesbians And Gays

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# Information for Parents



## What is PFLAG?

PFLAG stands for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. PFLAG understands all families have different values, morals and beliefs regardless of their culture, race or religion.

## Aims:

PFLAG helps families to understand their lesbian daughters and gay sons. PFLAG wants families to stay together and accept each others differences.

## How PFLAG helps families:

We offer referrals, telephone support, booklets and CD's to listen to other parents stories.

## Introduction:

Sometimes it's very hard to find information to help us understand what is happening with our young people when they tell us they are gay or lesbian and so this is why PFLAG has produced this booklet because it's important everyone loves and supports their children

## When gay sons and lesbian daughters "come out":

Many parents when first told that that their son is gay or daughter is lesbian feel shock. They can feel very confused, not able to sleep or eat.

Others just feel shock and horror because of the bad stories they hear about gays and lesbians. But these stories are spread by people who don't know the truth.

Some people get very angry and scream, yell and say bad things they may be sorry about later.

Most feel disappointment because they feel their kid's will have a lot of trouble in their life.

Sometimes parents blame their kid's friends, or blame each other, or blame themselves.

People always look for reasons as to why their kid is gay.

Others feel shame and are concerned what community and family will think and so want to keep this news a big secret.

As parents, we need to know it's ok to feel shocked or cry. It's ok to admit we don't understand what is happening. We need to understand being gay isn't normal for us but it is normal for our kids.

It's ok to take time to understand what is happening to our kids. But if you love your child you need to try and accept them as soon as possible. Sometimes it's hard for parents to understand and support their child while they have some sad feelings about what is happening.

It isn't unusual for parents to have many questions. Encourage your loved one to talk about new friends, new partner and places they go. Ask to meet their friends. This will help you to stop feeling scared.

For many parents regardless of colour and culture this is a time of grieving. Some parents feel it's like their child has died. Regardless of how sad or angry parents may feel at the beginning these feelings pass.

Lots of parents feel sad their son or daughter will not follow the traditional path. But our gay kids can still have good lives with nice partners.

Parents wonder why is my child gay? Some think it's only a phase, other blame their friends, some say it only happens with city folk, others think they have been tricked into being gay or lesbian. Some people keep it a secret, others try to be straight, some don't realize until later in life. It's very confusing for us as parents and also confusing them.

They know they will disappoint family or be rejected by family and community, but it's important that they be honest and not live their life a lie.

It's very important to know that our kids can't help being gay or lesbian. Sexual orientation is like the colour of our eyes, we can't choose.

## How to help them stay safe:

It's important to understand that to try and keep our kids safe from HIV and drugs we need to support them as much as possible. They need to know we love them and care about them.

Many lesbians and gays do drugs because they feel bad about themselves. When they feel bad about themselves

they take risks with unsafe sex practices, drugs and alcohol to help ease their inner pain.

## Stress for the gay person in family and community:

Family and community can sometimes be the lesbian or gay person's worst enemy. Sometimes they face more ridicule and abuse from community than they do from strangers. We know what it's like to be persecuted for things we have no control over and this is another burden for our kids.

This can cause depression and lots of times people consider suicide to escape being bullied or treated badly.

To prevent this from happening parents and community need to let their lesbian or gay kids that they are just as valued and respected as their straight brothers and sisters.

As parents regardless of culture or race we nearly always feel we are the only family that has a gay or lesbian loved one. But statistics show that 1 in 5 families have someone who is gay or lesbian. It is just that most just don't know because shame stops people talking about it.

Many parents wonder what they did wrong, or what caused their kids to be gay or lesbian. We need to understand they were born that way. It isn't the mother's fault or the father's fault.

Our kids aren't sick. They aren't bad people just because they're gay. They can still be good people in the community.

Our gay kids need acceptance, just like our straight kids. Parents and community need to be aware that if we want to keep their love and respect we need to respect them as well.