

Tips when having the conversation:

- ▶ Realise this conversation can be as difficult for your loved one as yourself
- ▶ Be patient and give them time to finish each question before moving on to the next question
- ▶ Understand that you may have the same conversation several times and let the young person know that this is a possibility, because it will take you a while to understand and feel comfortable with his/her news.
- ▶ Be prepared for some answers you may not like or be prepared for.
- ▶ Don't expect to have every question answered in the first conversation.
- ▶ Understand there may be some embarrassment to all parties involved so be sensitive.
- ▶ Explain to them that you don't understand but you want to.
- ▶ As a suggestion, don't make negative comments. Listen to what they have to say. As the parent you may be feeling negative or apprehensive for them but this should not be passed on to them, if possible. It won't help and it may only prevent them or make them hesitant about speaking to you again about this.
- ▶ Be aware that young people are initially very sensitive to judgment and rejection and so may be a little hyper sensitive.
- ▶ Finally, a hug and letting your child know your love is unconditional will go a long way towards keeping a strong bond with your son/daughter and the family united.



Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a peer support group for families coming to terms with loved ones with sexual diversity.

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**Questions
for those who want to
know and understand
sexual diversity
regarding a loved one
but just don't know
the questions to ask.**



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In the beginning, discussing sexual diversity with a loved one is often difficult.

This brochure has been written to help you get started and to break down barriers that sometimes develop just because we don't know the questions to ask.

Be patient and take time. Don't expect too much of yourself or your loved one. If the conversation becomes strained, step back and try again another time. Just don't give up.

So often Parents state:

- ▶ "the young person doesn't want to talk"
- ▶ "they want to talk but feel they are being intrusive"
- ▶ "they feel unsure about discussing personal information"

Young people state:

- ▶ "they would like to talk but think their parents don't want to know"
- ▶ "they don't know how to begin the conversation with parents"

Realistically both want to communicate but don't know where to start. Initially, conversations can be uncomfortable and for some may seem confrontational. Therefore we need to tread carefully about this sensitive topic.

When initiating conversation:

- ▶ be as calm and casual as possible
- ▶ make it at a time when there is a quiet period in the house
- ▶ or find a neutral space outside of the home
- ▶ be honest and say "you don't understand, but you want to"
- ▶ make sure it is not interpreted as an inquisition
- ▶ explain that honest discussions will help you to be comfortable and you want to be supportive
- ▶ sometimes, one on one discussions are better than having a group discussions even if the same questions are asked by others in the family

So here are some conversation starters on the topic of sexual diversity.

- ▶ How long have you known?
- ▶ Were you aware when you were younger that you felt different?
- ▶ Did you experience bullying at school?
- ▶ Have you told friends?
- ▶ Have you had anyone turn against you since "coming out"?
- ▶ Do you have a partner? If so; for how long?
- ▶ When can I meet him/her?
- ▶ What was your main concern about us finding out?
- ▶ Has "coming out" been as difficult as you anticipated?
- ▶ What has been positive for you regarding "coming out"?
- ▶ What do you want me to know about your sexual orientation?
- ▶ How can I best support you?
- ▶ Do you need support from other lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) groups?
- ▶ Do you have LGBT friends? If so; when can I meet them?
- ▶ Is it ok for me to tell family and friends?
- ▶ Would you like help to tell family and friends?
- ▶ Do you feel happier for being honest and telling us?
- ▶ How do you see your future life as a LGBT person?
- ▶ Has "coming out" changed things such as your career path, life's goals etc.
- ▶ Do you feel positive about your life now that you can be honest, regarding your sexuality? If not; why not?
- ▶ What do you see as difficulties; if any?
- ▶ What are your fears and concerns?
- ▶ How can I/we help/support/assist you?