



## How to Support Your Child Coming Out as LGBTQIA+

Coming out can be a scary, emotional experience at any age. For kids, this pivotal moment in their lives can be particularly stressful. Your response to them will deeply impact their relationship with you and themselves. Below are tips to help you make your child feel comfortable, loved, and supported when they come out.

- Keep the focus on your child. It's normal for both you and your child to feel emotional when they come out to you. Remember to stay focused on your child's feelings and needs during this time; they need you to be the adult and be there for them. You can and should process your feelings with your partner, therapist, or trusted friend—not your child.
- Let go of expectations about how your child will come out to you. Every coming out story is unique, despite what you may have seen portrayed in the media. Keep an open mind about how & when your child shares their sexual orientation or gender identity with you.
- Listen to understand, not respond. It's likely that, by the time your child tells you they're LGBTQIA+, they've rehearsed what they want to say for a long time. Practice listening actively to what they say, instead of forming responses in your head. This will help them feel heard and will allow you to choose your words thoughtfully.

### What to say—and what not to say—when your child comes out to you

After your child has come out to you as LGBTQIA+, it's time for you to respond. Here are some positive phrases you can say to show your child love and support, as well as some to avoid.

**Say “I love you.”** Your child needs to hear that you love them. However, try to avoid saying things like “I love you anyway,” which implies that there's something wrong with your child.

**Say “Thank you for trusting me.”** Your child coming out to you shows that they feel secure. Acknowledging that can strengthen your relationship even further.

**Say “I believe you.”** A common fear kids have when coming out to their parents is that their sexual orientation or identity will be labeled as a phase or a way to get attention. Reassure your child that you believe them.

**Say “I'm here for you.”** Being “in the closet” can make kids feel isolated and lonely. Remind them that they have you to lean on.

**Don't say “This is just a phase.”** Saying this will communicate to your child that you don't believe them and make it less likely that they'll trust you in the future.

**Say “What is the best way for me to support you right now?”** Don't assume that you know what they need now that they're out. They may not know what they need from you at the moment, but asking how you can help will make it easier for them to come to you when they do need something.

**Don't say “I already knew.”** Coming out is a big moment in a child's life. Hearing that their parents already knew can feel invalidating.

**Don't say “Why did you wait so long to tell me?”** Everyone must navigate coming out on their terms and questions like this can feel confrontational, not supportive.

**Don't question them.** You probably do have many questions for your child after they come out as LGBTQIA+. While you may be coming from a place of curiosity, your child may interpret your questions as judgment or disbelief.



## How to show ongoing support for your newly out LGBTQIA+ child

Being an ally for your child extends beyond how you respond when they come out to you. It's a lifelong practice of showing up, advocating, and supporting them. Here are some helpful ways to show continued support for your newly out child.

**Ask your child questions.** Asking questions about how they identify, which pronouns they prefer, and what they wish you understood can go a long way in supporting your child, while also helping you get to know this part of them.

**Educate yourself.** While it's great to ask questions that only your child can answer, don't rely on them to educate you on all things LGBTQIA+. Do your own research to get yourself up to speed.

**Use the correct terminology.** As an ally, you can show respect for your child and the LGBTQIA+ community they belong to by staying up to date with and using the correct terms. This is especially important when addressing people by their preferred pronouns.

**Be proactive about getting support for your child and yourself.** Having the support of a community or mental health professional can help you and your child feel better equipped to navigate them coming out.

**Have ongoing discussions about safety and mental health.** Ensuring your child feels comfortable enough at home to share safety concerns is crucial. Don't assume you know what is happening. Ask questions where appropriate while respecting their privacy. Discuss if they're concerned about not being accepted or being bullied. And touch base regularly because things can change quickly.

**Let your child take the lead with friends and family.** It is not your responsibility to tell everyone you know about their sexuality or gender identity. Telling the rest of the people in their life is up to the person who is coming out. You can support them if they are unsure how to proceed.

**Remember that you're important.** You are going to have a hard time supporting your child if you are not getting the support you need. Self-care is critical. Don't get so over-involved in their journey that you forget to explore your own journey as well.

## Additional Online Resources

[The Trevor Project](#)

[GLAAD](#)

[Human Rights Campaign](#)

[Strong Family Alliance](#)

[ACLU Know Your Rights](#)

[Q Chat Space \(A Community for LGBTQ+ Teens\)](#)

[Gender Spectrum \(Inclusive Spaces for Child and Teens\)](#)

[PFLAG \(Support for LGBTQ+ People and Families\)](#)