

ALL ABOUT SEXUALITY

Information and resources for parents and guardians about their gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or questioning kids.

SEXUALITY CAN BE HARD TO TALK ABOUT.

Talking about sexuality can be hard when we don't know the words to use. Here are some definitions of important sexuality related terms so that we're all on the same page right from the start. Note: This is not a complete list and includes only some common language. The language people use to describe their sexuality changes every day! If you hear a new term don't worry, just respectfully ask them to explain the term to you or research it yourself.

Sexual Orientation: A person's sexual identity based on who that person is attracted to.

LGBTQ: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning."¹

Lesbian: A term for women who are attracted to other women.

Gay: A term for people of any gender who are attracted to people of the same gender as themselves.

Bisexual: A term for people of any gender who are attracted to people who share the same gender as themselves, as well as people of different genders.

Queer: A broad term that includes people who are not straight and/or cisgender. This word is often used in a positive way by people who identify as queer however, some people still feel that it is a word is an insult.

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Asexual: A term for people of any gender who do not experience sexual attraction or who are not interested in sex. This is different from people who want to have sex, but choose not to have sex.

Pansexual: A term for people of any gender who are attracted to people of all genders.

Same Gender Loving: A term used by some instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express their attraction to people of the same gender as themselves.

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE QUESTIONS

We understand that you might have some questions about your child's sexuality. It's important for parents/guardians to have the opportunity to ask these questions and hopefully get some answers.

Below are some common questions parents have about sexuality.

IS THIS JUST A PHASE?

It is common for parents to think of new information related to their child's sexuality as "just a phase." For some people, their sexuality won't change during their life. For others though, sexuality can be fluid, which just means that over time their sexuality may change. This does not mean that the sexual orientation that your child was identifying with before was not real. It just means that their thoughts on their sexuality have changed and new words fit better with how they feel about their sexuality.

DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG TO MAKE MY CHILD GAY, BISEXUAL, A LESBIAN, ASEXUAL, ETC.?

No. Your child's sexuality is something that is simply a part of who they are. You did not do anything to make your child gay, bisexual, a lesbian, queer, or asexual.

IS BEING GAY, BISEXUAL, A LESBIAN, QUEER OR ASEXUAL A MENTAL ILLNESS?

No. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals agree that being gay, bisexual, a lesbian, queer or asexual is not an illness, a mental disorder, or an emotional problem.

HOW DO I TELL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

You should never disclose or "out" your child without talking to them first. Have a conversation with them about who else they have told or are out to, if they would like help coming out to anyone else, if they would like you to tell other people for them, or if they would like you to keep it to yourself until they are ready. Listen closely to your child and respect their wishes around telling anyone else about their sexual orientation.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD?

The most important thing you can do is to listen to what they need and how they want you to support them and then do your best to do those things. Taking the time to learn more about your child's sexual orientation is a good way to let your child know you care. Your child is still the same person they were before you knew about their sexual orientation--they need your unconditional love and support.

WILL MY CHILD BE OSTRACIZED, HAVE TROUBLE FINDING OR KEEPING A JOB, OR EVEN BE PHYSICALLY ATTACKED?

Unfortunately, these things are possible, but attitudes about sexual orientation are changing as society becomes more informed. There are many places where your child will be accepted for who they are. One of the most important places for acceptance is at home, so creating a safe and welcoming home life can make a huge difference in your child's well-being.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Bullying and LGBT Youth

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/index.html>

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Teens: Facts for Teens and Their Parents

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/dating-sex/Pages/Gay-Lesbian-and-Bisexual-Teens-Facts-for-Teens-and-Their-Parents.aspx>

Gay Straight Alliance

<http://gsanetwork.org/>

GLSEN

<http://www.glsen.org>

Parents' Influence on the Health of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Teens: What Parents and Families Should Know

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parents_influence_lgb.pdf

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

The Trevor Project

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

All About Gender

<http://bit.ly/2qdZ2SV>

SOURCES

Campaign, H. R. (n.d.). Glossary of Terms. Retrieved March 27, 2017, from <http://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

The Trevor Project. Glossary. Retrieved March 27, 2017, from <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/glossary#>

American Psychological Association. (2008). Answers to your questions: For a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality. Washington, DC: Author. [Retrieved from www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.pdf.]

PFLAG NYC - Frequently Asked Questions about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender Children. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2017, from <http://www.pflagnyc.org/support/parentsquestions>

1: Transgender is a term used for people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from their sex assigned at birth. Transgender is not a sexual orientation. For more information about gender identity, check out our All About Gender handout at <http://bit.ly/2ozJGHq>.



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