

Supporting LGBTQIA+ Children & Teens: A Guide for Parents and Guardians



Supporting an LGBTQIA+ child or teen is not about having all the right answers—it's about creating safety, connection, and trust while your child develops their identity.

Understanding Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

Sexual orientation refers to who someone is emotionally or romantically attracted to.

Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of their gender.

Gender expression refers to how someone presents themselves (clothes, hair, voice, interests).

These aspects of identity:

- Develop over time
- May change or become clearer as a child grows
- Are not caused by parenting, trauma, or "influence"

Identity is not something you create for your child—it's something you support them in discovering.

Why Parental Support Matters

Research consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ youth who experience parental acceptance have:

- Lower rates of anxiety and depression
- Lower risk of self-harm and suicidal thoughts
- Stronger self-esteem and resilience

Even small signals of support can have a protective effect.

From a nervous system perspective:

- Feeling accepted signals safety to the brain
- Safety allows the nervous system to move out of survival mode
- This supports emotional regulation, learning, and healthy development

You can be supportive and still learning.



What Support Looks Like in Everyday Life

Support does not require perfection.

Support does include:

- Listening more than correcting
- Using your child's chosen name and pronouns
- Allowing space for questions and uncertainty
- Advocating for your child's safety when needed
- Repairing when you make mistakes

Reflection: Checking in With Yourself

Take a moment to reflect honestly.

- **What emotions came up when I first learned about my child's identity?**
- **What fears feel most present for me right now?**
- **What values do I want to guide my parenting in this moment?**

Helpful vs. Unhelpful Responses

Helpful responses:

"Thank you for trusting me with this."

"I'm still learning, but I love you."

"How can I support you right now?"

Unhelpful (even if well-intended):

"This might just be a phase."

"You're too young to know."

"Let's not tell anyone yet"

(when driven by fear, not safety)

Common Parent Feelings

- Fear about safety or discrimination
- Grief over expectations they once held
- Confusion about language or identity terms
- Worry about "saying the wrong thing"

These feelings do not mean you are unsupportive. What matters most is how you respond after noticing them.

Impact matters more than intention.



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