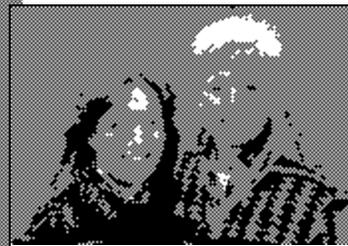




Our Daughters & Sons



Questions and Answers
for Parents of Gay, Lesbian
and Bisexual People





Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. is a support, education and advocacy organization. Founded in 1981 by 25 parents, PFLAG now represents more than 70,000 households and speaks for thousands of others. PFLAG affiliates are located in more than 400 communities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and five other countries. PFLAG is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization that is not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

Our Mission Statement

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their families and friends through:

- **support** — to cope with an adverse society;
- **education** — to enlighten an ill-informed public; and
- **advocacy** — to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

PFLAG
1101 14th Street, N.W., Suite 1030
Washington, D.C. 20005

Our Daughters and Sons: Questions and Answers for Parents of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People
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Reprinted 1998.
This booklet is based in part on *Can We Understand? A Guide for Parents*, prepared by New York City Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Our Daughters and Sons is dedicated to the memory of **Dwayne Stewart Brown** who appears on the cover. Dwayne and his family have been devoted members of PFLAG for many years. PFLAG is grateful for the opportunity to have known and worked with Dwayne. He will be remembered in our hearts and in our work.

If your son or daughter is gay, lesbian or bisexual, he or she is in good company: Alvin Ailey (choreog

What do you do when you first find out that your child is gay, lesbian or bisexual?

If you're like many parents, your first reaction is "How will I ever handle this?" Most parents aren't prepared for the words, "Mom, Dad. I'm gay."

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is here for you. We hope this booklet will help you understand your child's sexuality and its meaning to you and your continued relationship with your son or daughter. Our members consist of parents, families and friends of gay, lesbian and bisexual people. We most likely have been through much of what you are now feeling. We understand.

We can tell you with absolute certainty that you're not alone. According to some statistics, one in every ten people in this country and around the world is gay. Therefore, approximately one in four families has an immediate family member who is gay, lesbian or bisexual, and most families have at least one gay, lesbian or bisexual member in their extended family circle.

That means that there are plenty of people out there you can talk to. We can tell you from experience that talking about it really helps. There are books to read, telephone

helplines to call and people to meet who, by sharing their own experiences, can help you move forward. And PFLAG can connect you with the information and support services you need.

The second thing we can tell you is that — if you wish — you will emerge from this period with a stronger, closer relationship with your child than you have ever had before. That's been the case for all of us. But the path to that point is

often not easy.

Some parents were able to take the news in stride. But many of us went through something similar to a grieving process with all the accompanying shock, denial, anger, guilt and sense of loss. So if those are the feelings with

which you're dealing, they're understandable given our society's attitudes towards gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Don't condemn yourself for the emotions you feel. But, since you love your child, you owe it to him or her — and to yourself — to move toward acceptance, understanding and support.

While it may feel as if you have lost your child, you haven't. Your child is the same person he or she was yesterday. The only thing you have lost is your own image of that child and the understanding you

While it may feel as if you have lost your child, you haven't. Your child is the same person he or she was yesterday.

thought you had. That loss can be very difficult, but that image can, happily, be replaced with a new and clearer understanding of your child.

If your child is young, coming to an understanding with him or her may be crucial. Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth who are shut out by their parents have a comparatively high incidence of suicide and drug and alcohol abuse. Some teens protect themselves by putting as much distance between themselves and their parents as possible.

If your son or daughter “came out” to you voluntarily, you’re probably more than halfway there already. Your child’s decision to be open and

honest with you about something many in our society discourage took a tremendous amount of courage. And it shows an equally tremendous amount of love, trust and commitment to their relationship with you.

Now it’s up to you to match your child’s courage, commitment, trust and love with your own.

Is my child different now?

We think we know and understand our children from the day they are born. We’re convinced that we know what’s going on inside their heads.

So when a child announces “I’m gay,” and we hadn’t a clue — or

Definitions used in this booklet

Heterosexual — or straight — refers to people whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the opposite gender.

Homosexual — or gay — refers to people whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the same gender.

Homophobia refers to society’s misunderstanding, ignorance or fear of gay, lesbian or bisexual people.

Lesbian refers to women who are homosexual.

Bisexual — or **bi** — refers to people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for both genders.

“**Coming out**” refers to the process of identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual. It also refers to the process that parents go through when telling others about a gay loved one.

In this booklet, the word **gay** is used to include homosexuals and bisexuals, male and female.

we knew all along but denied it to ourselves — the reactions are often shock and disorientation.

You have a dream, a vision of what your child will be, should be, can be. It's a dream that is born of your own history, of what you wanted for yourself growing up, and especially of the culture around you. Despite the fact that a significant portion of the population is gay, American society still prepares us only with heterosexual dreams for our children.

The shock and disorientation you may feel is a natural part of a type of grieving process. You have lost something: your dream for your child. You also have lost the illusion that you can read your child's mind.

Of course, when you stop to think about it, this is true for all children, straight or gay. They're always surprising us. They don't marry who we might pick for them; they don't take the job we would have chosen; they don't live where we'd like them to live. In our society, though, we're better prepared to deal with those circumstances than with our child's "non-traditional" sexual orientation.

Keep reminding yourself that your child hasn't changed. Your child is the same person that he or she was before you learned about his or

her sexuality. It is your dream, your expectations, your vision that may have to change if you are to really know and understand your gay loved one.

Why did he or she have to tell us?

Some parents feel they would have been happier not knowing about their child's sexuality. They look back to before they knew and recall this time as problem-free — overlooking the distance they often felt from their child during that time.

Sometimes we try to deny what is happening — by rejecting what we're hearing ("It's just a phase; you'll get over it"); by shutting down ("If you choose that lifestyle, I don't want to hear about it"); or by not registering the impact of what we're being told ("That's nice,

dear, and what do you want for dinner?"). These are all natural reactions.

However, if you did not know the truth about your child's sexuality, you would never really know your child. A large part of his or her life would be kept secret from you, and you would never really know the whole person.

It is important to accept and understand your child's sexuality

“Our first response was to tell him we loved him and that nothing had changed. But in fact everything had changed. Suddenly he was a stranger.”

because homosexuality and bisexuality are not a phase.

While people may experiment for some time with their sexuality, someone who has reached the point of telling a parent that he or she is gay is not usually going through a phase. Generally, he or she has given long and hard thought to understanding and acknowledging his or her sexual orientation.

So if you're wondering, "Is she sure?" the answer will almost always be "yes." Telling a parent that you think you're gay involves overcoming too many negative stereotypes and taking far too much risk for anyone to take that step lightly or prematurely.

The fact that your son or daughter told you is a sign of his or her love and need for your support and understanding. It

took a lot of courage. And it shows a very strong desire for an open, honest relationship with you — a relationship in which you can love your child for who he or she is, rather than for who you want him or her to be.

Why didn't our child tell us before?

One difficult realization for you may be the recognition that your child has probably been thinking this through for months, even years, and

is only now telling you. It's easy to misinterpret this as a lack of trust, lack of love, or a reflection on your parenting. And it's painful to realize that you don't know your child as well as you thought you did, and that you have been excluded from a part of his or her life.

To some extent, this is true in all parenting relationships whether the child is gay or straight. There's a necessary separation between parent and child as the child moves toward adulthood. Your child may reach conclusions you would not

have reached, and will do it without consulting you.

But, in this case, it is particularly hard because the conclusion your child has reached is so important and, in many cases, so unexpected. You may have been shut out of

your child's thinking for a long period of time.

Gay people may hold back from their parents as long as possible because it has taken them a long time to figure out what they're feeling themselves. In other words, gay, lesbian and bisexual youth often recognize at an early age that they feel "different," but it may take years before they can put a name to these feelings.

Because we still live in a society that misunderstands or is fearful of gay people, it takes time for them

“Since my daughter has told us she’s a lesbian, we have become much closer.”

to acknowledge their sexuality to themselves. Gay people have often internalized self-hate or insecurity about their sexual identity. It may take time for someone to think through and work up the courage to tell a parent. Even if you feel your child should have known they could tell you anything, remember that our culture's treatment of homosexuality says "don't ask, don't tell."

So, even as you may grieve for not having been able to help your child through that period — or even if you believe that the outcome would have been different if you had been involved earlier — understand that your child probably could not have told you any sooner. Most importantly, doing so now is an invitation to a more open and honest relationship.

Why is my child gay?

Parents often ask this question for a number of reasons: they may be grieving over losing an image of their child; they feel they did something wrong; they feel that someone "led" their child into homosexuality; or they wonder if there is a biological cause of homosexuality.

Some parents react with shock, denial and anger to the news that their child is gay. One response is to wonder, "How could she do this to me?" This is not a rational reaction, but it is a human response to pain.

We liken this reaction to a grieving process: here, you are grieving over losing an image of

your child. As you work through your feelings, you may discover that the only thing your child has "done" to you is to trust that your relationship could grow as a result of you knowing the truth about him or her.

You may feel that your child has been led into homosexuality by someone else. It is a popular misconception that homosexuals "recruit." The truth is that no one "made" your child gay. He or she has most likely known that he or she was "different" for a very long time — no person or group of people "converted" your child.

Other parents believe feel that their parenting is the cause of their child's sexual identity. For years, psychology and psychiatry have bandied around theories that homosexuality is caused by parental personality types — the dominant female, the weak male — or by the absence of same-gender role models. Those theories are no longer accepted within psychiatry and psychology, and part of PFLAG's work focuses on erasing these myths and misconceptions from our popular culture.

Gay people come from all types of families. Some have dominant mothers, while others may have dominant fathers. Gay men, lesbians and bisexuals are only children and they're youngest, middle and oldest children. They come from families with siblings who are gay and families with siblings who are not gay. Many come from what society would consider "model" families.

Many parents wonder if there is a genetic or biological basis to homosexuality. While there are some studies on homosexuality and genetics, there are no conclusive studies to date on the “cause” of homosexuality. In the absence of this data, we would encourage you to ask yourself why it is important for you to know why.

Does support or love for your child rely on your ability to point to a cause? Do we ask heterosexual people to justify their sexuality that way? Remember that gay, lesbian and bisexual people exist in every walk of life, religion, nationality and racial background. Therefore, all gay people, like straight people, are very different and have come into their sexual identity in very different ways. Although we may be curious, it is really not that important to know why your child is gay in order to support and love him or her.

Why am I uncomfortable with his or her sexuality?

The apprehension you may feel is a product of our culture. Homophobia is too pervasive in our society to be banished easily from our consciousness. As long as homophobia exists, any gay person and any parent of a gay, lesbian or bisexual youth has some very real and legitimate fears

and concerns.

Many parents may confront another source of guilt. Parents who see themselves as “liberal,” who believe they have put sexual prejudice behind them — even those who have gay friends — are sometimes stunned to recognize that they are uncomfortable when it is their kid who is gay. These parents not only have to grapple with deep-rooted

fears of homosexuality, but also have the added burden of thinking they shouldn’t feel the way they do.

It helps to concentrate on real concerns: what your child needs most from you now. Try not to focus on the guilt. It is base-

less, and it accomplishes nothing for yourself or for your child.

Should we consult a psychiatrist or psychologist?

Consulting a therapist in the hopes of changing your child’s sexual orientation is pointless. Homosexuality is not a disease to be “cured.” Homosexuality is a natural way of being.

Because homosexuality is not “chosen,” you cannot “change your child’s mind.” The American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association have taken the official position that it would be unethical to even try to change the sexual orientation of a

“When I found out my son was gay, my reaction was ‘What can we do to change it?’”

gay person. In 1997, the American Psychological Association again publically cautioned against so-called “reparative therapy,” also known as conversion therapy.

But there are situations where it can be helpful to consult people experienced with family issues and sexual orientation. You may want to talk to someone about your own feelings and how to work through them. You may feel that you and your child need help communicating clearly through this period. Or you may recognize that your child is unhappy and needs help with self-acceptance.

Once again, gay people often have trouble accepting themselves and their sexual identity. In this circumstance, self-rejection could be a dangerous emotional state.

In all of these cases, you have a number of options and resources. PFLAG members, either individually or in support groups, can provide you with the information, space and resources you may need to build a stronger relationship with your gay child.

A therapist can also provide the confidentiality and, to a degree, the anonymity that you may feel you need at first. PFLAG members may be able to suggest a therapist that has helped their families.

There are a variety of resources for help, information and advice. We encourage you to explore your options and to use those best suited for you and your family. Please refer to the resource

section in the back of this booklet for suggestions.

Will my child be ostracized, have trouble finding or keeping a job, or even be physically attacked?

All of these things are possible. It depends on where your son or daughter lives, what kind of job he or she takes — but attitudes toward homosexuality have begun to change, and are now changing relatively quickly. There are many places where your child can live and work relatively free of discrimination.

Unfortunately, societal change is often slow — just look at how long it took for women to achieve voting rights in this country.

Progress is often also accompanied by backlash. Until more individuals and more organizations become advocates for gay rights, until homophobia is eradicated in our society, your child does face some significant challenges.

How do I reconcile this with my religion?

For some parents, this may be the most difficult issue to face. For others, it’s a non-issue.

It is true that some religions continue to condemn homosexuality. But even within these religions, there are respected leaders who believe that their church’s position of condemnation is unconscionable.

In 1997, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued a pastoral statement urging parents to love and support their gay children. In a 1994 pastoral letter, the U.S. Episcopal bishops wrote, "As it can be for heterosexual persons, the experience of steadfast love can be for homosexual persons an experience of God."

Many mainstream American religions have now taken official stands in support of gay rights. Some have gone further. The Methodist Church, for example, has developed a network of reconciling congregations welcoming gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Since 1991, the United Church of Christ has had a denominational policy stating that sexual orientation should not be a barrier to ordination. In the Episcopal Church, the denomination's legislative body has declared that gay people have a full and equal claim with all other people upon the church.

You will still hear people quote the Bible in defense of their prejudice against gay people. But many Biblical scholars dispute any anti-gay interpretations of Biblical texts.

The resource list at the back of this booklet cites references that can help you learn more about changing religious attitudes toward homosexuality. PFLAG can help

refer you to information and listings specific to your own religion.

What about HIV/AIDS?

While AIDS initially spread fastest among gay and bisexual men, and drug users who shared needles, all people and communities now face the threat of AIDS.

Therefore, every parent needs to be concerned about HIV/AIDS—whether your child is gay or straight. You should make sure your child

understands how AIDS is transmitted and how to protect him or herself.

With teenagers becoming sexually active at younger ages, and with AIDS still spreading, no parent can afford to ignore the danger or assume his or her child is safe.

If your child is presently HIV-positive or has AIDS, he or she now needs your support more than ever. You should know that you are not alone. There are numerous local and national organizations that can help you with medical, psychological and physical care. PFLAG can refer you to other parents and families in similar situations, and resources specific to your needs. Call the PFLAG national office for a contact near you. At this point, your relationship with your child can become even closer but

“Coming out” is often considered a positive way to avoid societal invisibility that can lead to internalized self-hate or lack of self-esteem.

your family will have to learn to adjust to the physical and emotional circumstances of your child's changing health.

Are there special legal concerns for my child?

A number of laws regulating sexual behavior are still on the books in some states, some dating back to the last century. According to these laws, some or all homosexual behavior is illegal as are many heterosexual behaviors.

Many states have repealed these laws; others have not. While enforcement is usually rare among individuals, anti-gay and sodomy laws are often used against gay, lesbian and bisexual people in custody disputes, legal actions and attempts to discriminate against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation.

There is hope, however. Many cities, towns and states have worked both to decriminalize homosexual behavior and recognize homosexuality as natural. These jurisdictions have taken measures to ensure non-discrimination.

For more information on individual state and local laws, refer to the resource list provided in the back of this booklet.

We have accepted the situation, but why must they flaunt it?

Gays, lesbians and bisexuals are often accused of "flaunting" their sexuality when they "come out" as

gay, when they are publicly affectionate with a same-sex partner, or when they wear gay symbols and T-shirts or participate in gay pride parades.

In a world that still assumes all people are heterosexual, "coming out" is the only way gay, lesbian and bisexual people can make their sexual orientation known.

And "coming out" is often considered a positive way to avoid societal invisibility that can lead to internalized self-hate or lack of self-esteem.

You may be uncomfortable with your child's public displays of affection with his or her same-gender partner. Bear in mind that all couples — straight and gay — often show affection publicly because they feel love and appreciation for their partner.

But stop and think — are you as uneasy about heterosexuals showing affection in public?

In these two instances, "flaunting it" may only be behaving in a relaxed, natural fashion in public. In other circumstances, it may be a political decision to assert one's sexuality by wearing a T-shirt or participating in a public event. In cultures that either ignore homosexuality or deride it, stressing one's sexuality publicly can be an important act of self-affirmation.

If you worry about possible negative reactions to any behavior that identifies your child as gay, keep in mind that some gays, lesbians and bisexuals will, of course,

cancel their own behavior because they share those fears. But it is up to your child to make those decisions for him or herself.

Will my child have a family of his or her own?

Longtime gay and lesbian couples perceive their relationship as just as committed and as much a family as married heterosexuals. Many couples hold commitment ceremonies to celebrate their relationship formally, in the company of friends and family.

A number of state and local governments now recognize same-gender partners. Increasingly more companies, including IBM and American Express, also provide “domestic partner” health coverage and benefits.

And more gay and lesbian couples are also becoming parents. Some lesbians have used artificial insemination to conceive a child that they can raise with their partner.

Some gay men and lesbians, who came out after they had been involved in heterosexual relationships, are raising the children from those relationships with their gay partners. Also, more and more gay couples are adopting children together.

How do we tell family and friends?

Just as “coming out” is difficult for gay people, the coming-out process is equally difficult for parents. Many, upon learning their child is gay, go right into the closet. As they struggle with accepting their child’s sexual orientation, they often worry about other people finding out. There is the challenge of fielding such questions as, “Has he got a girlfriend?” and “So when is she going to get married?”

Many of us found that our fears were far worse than reality. Some of us held off for years in telling our own parents — our children’s grandparents — only to have them respond, “We knew that quite a while ago.”

Our advice to you is the same advice we give to gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. Learn more about the changing attitudes within medical, psychiatric, religious, professional and political circles. There are plenty of “authorities” you can quote as allies in defense of equal rights for gay people. We provide you with partial lists in the back of this pamphlet.

Reread this booklet’s list of famous gays, lesbians and bisexuals who have made lasting contributions to our world. Remember, with

“We were frightened that our son would be judged; we were frightened that we would be judged.”

many gay people keeping their sexual orientation hidden, this is just a fraction of the names you could cite. It also means that you probably already know many gay people.

Practice what you would say just like you might practice for a public speaking engagement, for a job interview, for boosting your assertiveness, or for anything new to you that makes you afraid or nervous.

One parent says, "I used to go in the bathroom and close the door and practice saying to the mirror, 'I have a lesbian daughter' and saying it with pride. And it helped. But you really do have to practice."

Talk to people who understand your concerns. PFLAG members may be helpful to you in discussing their own experiences. Contact the national office or a local PFLAG leader to learn more about PFLAG's extensive network of several hundred chapters in the U.S. and abroad.

You may get some negative or, at the least, insensitive comments from relatives, friends or co-workers. But you'll probably find that those comments are fewer than you now fear.

Remember that your child has

been down this road already. He or she may even be able to help.

And remember also that who you tell about your child's sexuality should be a decision that both of you discuss and reach together.

What will the neighbors say?

This could be a very real concern, especially for families who consider themselves part of a close commu-

nity or in areas where fundamentalist religions are strong.

But gay, lesbian and bisexual people come from families from all corners of the earth, from every culture, religion, ethnic group and occupation.

One parent says, "I thought I was the only mother in Tulsa, Oklahoma who had a lesbian daughter.

And then, as I started speaking out on the issue, other parents started coming forward. And now, every time someone says to me, 'I need to talk with you,' I know exactly what's coming up."

Again, you may very well encounter reactions that are difficult to take. But often, PFLAG members encounter reactions like... "I thought I was the only one."

"When I stood up and said 'I have a lesbian daughter,' that made it easier for some other parents to deal with the issue and to come forward themselves. I've experienced that over and over again."

How can I support my child?

As a parent, you have to take care of yourself and your child. PFLAG is here to help you with your individual needs so that you can be an even better parent.

Reading this booklet is the first step to supporting your child — you have shown that you are open to new information and hopefully you are now better informed.

Supporting your child now should be a natural extension of your general support as a parent: we need to talk, listen and learn together.

Every child needs different things from his or her parents. It is up to you to learn how to communicate with him or her about their needs and issues surrounding sexuality.

Some parents find that they are better able to understand and support their child by recognizing the similarities and differences in their own life experiences. In some cases it may help to talk about how you have dealt with hurtful incidents.

But in other cases you must recognize that discrimination based on sexual orientation is hurtful in a unique way.

Here, you can support your child by educating yourself as thoroughly as possible about homosexuality and by helping to bring it out of hiding in our society. It's the hiding that allows the prejudice and discrimination to survive.

Will I ever learn to deal with this new knowledge?

A psychiatrist answered the question this way: "Once most people adjust to the reality of their child's sexual orientation, they feel like they've had a whole new world opened to them.

"First, they become acquainted with a side of their child they never knew. They now are included in their child's life. Usually, they get closer. And the parents begin to meet the gay community and understand that these are people just like any other community."

Another way to answer this question is to let some parents speak for themselves:

"I hit a point where I was feeling sad and thinking what would I say when people asked, 'How is Gary?' And then it occurred to me: Gary's fine. I'm the one who's not. And once I reached that point, it was easier...as we met Gary's friends, we found them to be wonderful people and realized that he's really part of a pretty terrific community. So what's the problem? It's society's problem. That's when we figured we were over the hump."

— Mother of a gay son

"I'd say that reading and learning more about sexual orientation is what helped me most...laying to rest some of the myths I had heard.... So the more I learned, the angrier I got,

and the more I wanted to change society instead of my son.”

— Mother of a gay son

“I think the turning point for me was when I read more about it, and read that most kids who can accept their sexuality say they feel calmer, happier and more confident. And of course, that’s what I wanted for my child and I sure didn’t want to be what was standing in the way of that.”

— Father of a gay son

“I was teary-eyed for three months off and on. But we’ve always had a very good relationship. It has never changed from that. We never had an instant’s question of our love for him, and we both assured him immediately that we loved him. And since then, our relationship with our son is strengthened, because we have a bond simply because we know what he is up against in our society.”

— Mother of a gay son

“It’s really important to talk about it, to know that you’re not alone, that there are other people who have had this experience and are dealing with it in a positive way. And the benefit is that you establish a good relationship with your child. Parents want to parent. They don’t, generally speaking, want to be isolated from their kid.”

— Mother of a lesbian daughter

“For me, it was my son’s saying to me, ‘Dad, I’m the same person I was before.’ Now it’s been six months, and I realize even more that really, nothing has changed in his life. It was our perception of him, I guess.”

— Father of a gay son

“I have to tell you, there are so many pluses now. You begin to recognize what an incredible child you have to share this with you and to want you to be a part of their lives.... [Look at] the trust that has been placed in your hands and how much guts it took to do that.”

— Father of a lesbian daughter

Resources

PFLAG offers support, education and advocacy opportunities to all family members and friends and welcomes you and your gay, lesbian or bisexual loved ones to join our network. We suggest you call the local chapter whose name is stamped on the back of this booklet.

If there is no chapter listed, you can call PFLAG's national office for a referral, or you can use directory assistance to find PFLAG in your local area.

Local PFLAG chapters or a local gay/lesbian/bisexual community center can provide ways for you to meet other parents, for a young gay man or lesbian to meet other gay youth, or for you and your child together to meet other families and people who can help by sharing their own experiences.

We offer resources and publications on a number of issues including HIV/AIDS, religion and youth.

Toll-free helplines for youth:

Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth (BAGLY), (800) 42-BAGLY. 24-hour hotline.

Indianapolis Youth Group, (800) 347-TEEN. Thursday - Sunday, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., EST.

Out Youth Austin, (800) 96-YOUTH. Daily, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Central Time.

For HIV/AIDS information:

National AIDS Hotline, (800) 342-AIDS. 24-hour hotline.

National AIDS Hotline (Spanish), (800) 344-7432. 24-hour hotline.

National AIDS Hotline (TDD), (800) 243-7889. 24-hour hotline.

Organizations:

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), 1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 1030, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 638-4200, www.pflag.org for a reference to a local PFLAG chapter near you.

There are numerous organizations that work on behalf of gay, lesbian and bisexual people. The following list includes groups that may be able to provide you with information or services for you or your child:

Bisexual Resource Center, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140, (617) 424-9595, www.qrd.org/qrd/www/orgs/brc/brc-toc.html

COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), 2300 Market Street, Box 165, San Francisco, CA 94114, (415) 861-5437, www.colage.org

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, 150 West 26th Street, Suite 503, New York, NY 10001, (212) 807-1700, www.glaad.org

Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, P.O. Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091, (202) 583-8029, www.GLPCI.org

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 122 W. 26th Street, Suite 1100, New York, NY 10001, (212) 727-0135, www.glsen.org

Hetrick-Martin Institute for Lesbian and Gay Youth, 2 Astor Place, 3rd

• Herman Melville (novelist) • Michelangelo (artist) • Yukio Mishima (novelist) • Cherrie Moraga (aut)

Floor, New York, NY 10003, (212) 674-2400.

Human Rights Campaign, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 628-4160, www.hrc.org

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005-3904.

LLEGO, The National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization, 1612 K Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 466-8240.

National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, 1436 U Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 483-6786, www.nblglf.org

National Center for Lesbian Rights, 870 Market Street, Suite 570, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 392-6257.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2320 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009-2702, (202) 332-6483, www.nglft.org

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition and The Bridges Project, 1711 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 206, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 319-7596. The National Youth Advocacy Coalition addresses public policy issues related to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth through the collaboration of a broad spectrum of national and community-based organizations. NYAC's Bridges Project, originally established by the Americans Friends Service Committee, provides information, resources, and assistance to gay youth and their adult allies nationwide.

Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL), 410 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003-2707, (202) 546-5940.

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350, New York, NY 10036, (212) 819-9770, www.SIECUS.org

Allies for Equal Rights:

Countless organizations support equal rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The following is a partial list of allies:

Religious organizations: Catholic Theological Society of America, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Commission of Social Action Reform Judaism, Lutheran Church of America, National Council of Churches, National Federation of Priests' Councils, Protestant Episcopal Church, Society of Friends (Quaker), Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Unitarian-Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church and United Presbyterian Church.

Professional organizations: American Anthropological Association, American Association for Advancement of Science, American Association of University Professors, American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO), American Library Association, American Medical Students Association, American Personnel and Guidance Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, American Public Health Association, National Association of Social Workers and National Education Association.

Civic organizations: American Civil Liberties Union, League of Women Voters, Libertarian Party, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), National Organization for Women (NOW), National Plan of Action, National Women's Conference (IWY), People for the American Way and Young Women's Christian Association of the United States (YWCA).

Recommended Videos:

Always My Kid: A Family Guide to Understanding Homosexuality. 1994, 74 minutes. Triangle Video Productions, 550 Westcott, Suite 400, Houston, Texas 77007; (713) 869-4477; Fax: (713) 861-1577.

Straight From The Heart: Stories Of Parents' Journeys To A New Understanding Of Their Lesbian And Gay Children. 1994, 26 minutes. Dee Mosbacher, producer. Motivational Media, 8430 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069; (800) 848-2707.

Queer Son: Family Journeys To Understanding and Love. 1994, 48 minutes. Vickie Seitchik, 19 Jackson Street, Cape May, NJ 08204; (212) 929-4199.

Recommended reading for parents, family and friends:

Olivier (actor) • Cole Porter (composer) • Marcel Proust (novelist) • Eleanor Roosevelt (First La

And Say Hi To Joyce: The Life and Chronicles of a Lesbian Couple, Deb Price and Joyce Murdoch. Doubleday, 1995.

Are You Still My Mother? Gloria Guss Back. Warner Books, 1985.

Beyond Acceptance, Carolyn Griffin and Marian and Arthur Wirth. Prentice-Hall, 1986.

Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians, Louise Rafkin. Cleis Press, 1987.

Family: A Portrait of Gay and Lesbian America, Nancy Andrews. Harper San Francisco, 1994.

Hearing Us Out: Voices from the Gay and Lesbian Community, Roger Sutton. Little, Brown and Company, 1994.

Homosexuality: The Secret A Child Dare Not Tell, Mary Ann Cantwell. Rafael Press, 1996.

Loving Someone Gay: Revised and Updated, Don Clark, Ph.D. Signet Books, 1987.

My Son Eric, Mary V. Borhek. The Pilgrim Press, 1979.

Now That You Know: What Every Parent Should Know About Homosexuality, Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward. Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1989.

Parents Matter, Ann Muller. Naiad Press, 1987.

Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms With the Suicide of Her Gay Son, Leroy Aarons. Harper San Francisco, 1995.

Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together, Robert A. Bernstein. Thunder's Mouth Press, 1995.

The Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out, Robb Forman Dew. Ballantine Books, 1995. Audiotape available from Simon & Schuster.

Recommended reading on religion and homosexuality:

Can Homophobia Be Cured? Wrestling with Questions that Challenge the Church, Bruce Hilton. Abington Press, 1992.

Homosexuality and Religion, Richard Hasbany, editor. Haworth Press, 1990.

In God's Image; Christian Witness to the Need for Gay/Lesbian Equality in the Eyes of the Church, Robert Warren Cromey. Alamo Square Press, San Francisco, 1991.

Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response, Letha Scanzoni and Virginia R. Mollenkott. Harper San Francisco, 1994.

Pastor, I Am Gay, Rev. Howard H. Bess. Palmer Publishing Company, 1995.

Stranger at the Gate, Rev. Mel White, Simon & Schuster, 1995.
The New Testament and Homosexuality, Robin Scroggs. Augsburg
Fortress, 1984.
Twice Blessed: On Being Gay & Jewish, Christie Balka and Andy Rose,
editors. Beacon Press, 1989.
What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality, Daniel Helminiak.
Alamo Square Press, 1994.

Recommended reading for gay, lesbian and bisexual people:

Becoming A Man: Half A Life Story, Paul Monette. Harper Collins, 1992.
Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out, Loraine Hutchins and
Lani Kaahumanu, editors. Alyson Publications, 1991.
Coming Out to Parents, Mary Borhek. Pilgrim Press, 1993.
Gay Men and Women Who Enriched the World, Thomas Cowan. William
Mulvey, Inc., 1988.
Hometowns: Gay Men Write About Where They Belong, John Preston,
editor. Penguin, 1991.
**Is it a Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked
Questions About Gays and Lesbians**, Eric Marcus. Harper Collins,
1993.
Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life, Warren J. Blumenfeld and Diane
Raymond. Beacon Press, 1988.
**Outing Yourself: How to Come Out as Lesbian or Gay to Your Family,
Friends, and Coworkers**, Michelangelo Signorile. Random House,
1995.
Positively Gay: New Approaches to Gay and Lesbian Life, Betty Berzon,
editor. Celestial Arts, 1992.
Testimonies: A Collection of Lesbian Coming Out Stories, Karen Barber
and Sarah Holmes, editors. Alyson Publications, 1994.
Revelations: A Collection of Gay Male Coming Out Stories, Adrian Saks
and Wayne Curtis, editors. Alyson Publications, 1994.
**Uncommon Heroes: A Celebration of Heroes and Role Models for Gay
and Lesbian Americans**, Phillip Sherman. Fletcher Press New York,
1994.

Recommended reading specifically for gay, lesbian and bisexual teens:

Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence, Marion Dane Bauer, editor.
Harper Collins, 1994.
Annie On My Mind, Nancy Garden. Harper Collins, 1992.

(composer) • Bessie Smith (singer) • Gertrude Stein (writer) • Peter Ilyich Tchai- kovsky (composer)

Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School and College Students, Kevin Jennings, editor. Alyson Publications, 1994.

Being Different: Lambda Youths Speak Out, Larry D Brimmer. Grolier, 1995.

Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens are Leading a New Way Out, Gilbert Herdt and Andrew Boxer. Beacon Press, 1993.

Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth and Their Allies, Ellen Bass and Kate Kaufman. Harper Perennial, 1996.

Growing Up Gay/Growing Up Lesbian: A Literary Anthology, Bennett L. Singer, editor. The New Press, 1993.

Joining the Tribe: Growing Up Gay & Lesbian in the '90s, Linnea Due. Anchor Books, 1995.

The Journey Out: A Book for & About Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Teens, Rachel Pollack and Cheryl Schwartz. Puffin Books, 1995.

Two Teenagers in Twenty, Ann Heron, editor. Alyson Publications, 1994.

Understanding Sexual Identity: A Book for Gay and Lesbian Teens, Janice Rench. Lerner, 1990.

When Someone You Know Is Gay, Susan and Daniel Cohen. Dell, 1989.

Young, Gay & Proud!, Don A Romesburg, editor. Alyson Publications, 1995.

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• Leonardo da Vinci (artist) • Walt Whitman (poet) • Oscar Wilde (novelist) • Tennessee Williams

PFLAG Publications:

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Respect All Youth Issue Papers by Ann Thompson Cook

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