



Questions & Answers

*for Parents and Family Members of
Gay and Lesbian Youth*



供同性戀
青少年的
家長及家人
參考的問與答

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All children and teenagers need to feel good about themselves. All people are valuable and deserve to be treated with respect. But it can be difficult for gay and lesbian youth to feel good about themselves when many people around them treat them badly or believe that lesbians and gays have something “wrong” with them. Many gay and lesbian youth feel the need to hide who they really are because of fear their family will not be accepting.

This booklet is dedicated to parents and family members who are dealing with their child’s coming out process, or preparing for the process.

What should I do if I think my child is attracted to people of the same sex?

It probably takes a lot of courage for you to ask yourself this question. Before you go about looking for answers, it is important to ask yourself why it is you want to know? What would it mean to you if your child was lesbian or gay? Why do you feel a need to do something about it at this point? What is your motivation?

Ask yourself: are you comfortable with talking to your child about sexuality? If you feel interested and comfortable in approaching your child about this, do you think he or she is ready to talk to you about it too? And what would you do if your child identified as lesbian or gay?

Keep in mind how you choose to act or react to your child may have certain meanings for them. For example, your child may find it easier to approach you if you seem to be open to new ideas. Alternately, if your child senses that he or she will be punished for being honest, they may choose to talk to someone else instead.

My child was trying to tell me about her/his sexual orientation, but I just don’t know how to handle the conversation. What should I do?

If your child was trying to disclose their sexual orientation to you, it probably means that you are important to them. It also means that they are looking for your support in this situation, so how you react will probably have a strong impact on your child.

The most important thing you can do is to respect your child's decision to tell you. So, let him or her do most of the talking. You will likely have many questions for both your child and for yourself. Try to gain a better understanding of their point of view. Remember, your child is still the same person. Your child hasn't changed, it's only what you know about them that has changed.

Coming to terms with your child's sexual orientation can be a lengthy process with many opposing emotions and thoughts. You can't be expected to understand everything right away!

Did I do something wrong?

Many parents ask this question when they first find out that their child is attracted to people of the same sex. There are really two parts to this question. First, that being lesbian or gay is "wrong" or "unnatural." Second, that a child's upbringing "causes" them to be lesbian or gay.

The idea of love between people of the same sex feels unnatural or wrong to many people. Some people feel this way as a result of conscious moral judgments, or because of cultural and religious teachings. Some people feel this way because they have been given very little information about people who are attracted to others of the same sex. And often, the information we receive is negative or inaccurate.

Fortunately, feelings of discomfort change when understanding and knowledge increases.

You are not alone if you are feeling guilty or responsible somehow for your child's sexual orientation. Many parents focus on finding the "cause" of their child's sexuality because they see it as a problem. For many parents, searching for a definite cause of sexuality is very difficult and more puzzling since there is no recognized causes of homosexuality or heterosexuality.

One way that some parents deal with these feelings is to focus on exploring why and how they see their child's sexuality as a problem. They often discover that cultural values, societal discrimination against lesbian and gay people, negative portrayal in the media, religious beliefs, and unfamiliarity with the subject play a bigger role in their discomfort than they expected.

What will other people think? How do I face family and friends?

First, ask yourself why you are so fearful or concerned. Your child may be able to give you some support in this area, as she or he has probably experienced emotions similar to the ones you are now going through.

The anticipation about telling others about your child's sexual orientation can be overwhelming. Are you concerned about what others feel or think? For many parents, it is very difficult and takes a lot of courage to tell others, even if they themselves are accepting of their child's sexual orientation. Chances are, some people's reactions will be positive, and some negative.

When you consider telling others, it is important to know that you have some control about who to tell, how to tell, and when to tell. You can also talk to your child about their comfort levels and coming out strategies too. After all, they have to contemplate these issues almost constantly. Some parents find it helpful to share their story with, and hear stories of other parents with lesbian or gay children.

I want grandchildren. Will my lesbian or gay child have children?

Many people in same-sex relationships have children. That being said, having children is becoming less of an obligation and more of a choice for people nowadays, regardless of their sexual orientation.

If your child chooses not to have children of her/his own, you may feel angry or disappointed that the family name or heritage will not be carried on. The issue is just as complicated for many lesbian or gay people, who fear letting their parents and family down. Your child's choice to remain childless impacts you, though they probably do not make that decision to deliberately hurt you.

Will my child get AIDS because they are lesbian or gay?

No. AIDS is caused by the virus called HIV, and HIV infects women and men or all sexual orientations and backgrounds. HIV is passed on from an infected person to someone else through body fluids. Whether someone gets infected or not depends only on what they do, and not what their sexual orientation is.

Are lesbian or gay people more promiscuous than heterosexual people?

The general perspective of sexual relations varies a lot from culture to culture. You may have grown up in a time and place where people usually married the first or second person they were in a relationship with. In this time in North America, it can be quite different. Many immigrant and non-immigrant parents in North America today are coping with similar anxieties about the cultural and value differences they see in their children and in the broader society.

However, sexual activities are only part of lesbian and gay people's lives. We should always look at the various aspects of a person's life – such as personality, family relationships, professional or academic accomplishments, and romantic relationships. It is not true that lesbian or gay people are more promiscuous, on the whole, than heterosexual people.

Do lesbian or gay people have meaningful relationships? Can they really be in love?

Yes. You may be concerned that your child will be alone or lonely. This may be because the general public may have seen very few role models or same-sex couples. In fact, many people have meaningful and fulfilling relationships with same-sex partners. It is widely recognized that loving relationships have little to do with the gender of the partners.

A parent's love and support is very important in maintaining any relationship. This support must also come from the community and society. If a couple cannot feel safe to express their affection for each other, or if they must constantly be in "hiding," it is more difficult for them to maintain a strong relationship. Therefore, including your lesbian or gay child and partner in family functions may be important validation for them.

In Canada, your lesbian or gay child can be legally married with someone of the same gender.

Will my child or my family be discriminated against?

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the British Columbia Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. This means that it is a violation of those rights to deny service, employment, benefits, and other treatment to someone because they are lesbian or gay.

Of course, many forms of discrimination, including racism, are still present in Canada – despite laws prohibiting them. Lesbian and gay people and their families often experience hatred or fear of them. This hatred and fear is together referred to as “homophobia.”

Homophobia exists in many forms and can range from jokes that demean lesbian and gay people, to denying visitation rights in hospitals, to more serious physical harassment. Some parents, and lesbian and gay people, feel helpless in combating discrimination. However, it may be empowering to realize that incidents of homophobia can be challenge. Many parents show their support to their lesbian children by challenging homophobia when and where it happens.

Does my child’s school teach about gay and lesbian issues? Will my child be safe at school?

Public schools in British Columbia have an obligation to create safe and affirming spaces for all the communities they serve. This includes discussion of gay and lesbian issues, as part of changes to the provincial curriculum. Family diversity, sexual orientation, homophobia and discrimination are part of the new *Health & Career K-7* and *Social Studies K-7* curriculum in British Columbia. This curriculum is mandatory for students in British Columbia’s elementary schools. High schools are also addressing these issues in a variety of ways. Harassment and discrimination is unacceptable in schools. Schools must work to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination in all of its forms – including homophobia. Talk to your school’s principal if you have any questions.

Community Resources

The (LGBT) Centre, 1170 Bute Street @ Davie

www.lgbtcentrevancouver.com 604-684-5307

Information and referral, education, peer groups, social support, recovery meetings, free counseling, sexually transmitted disease clinic

Gab Youth Services – Youth Drop-ins, one-to-one support, PrideSpeaks for schools: 604-684-4901

Out on Shelves Library: 604-684-5309

Prideline, 7-10 p.m. nightly: 604-684-6869

Bute Street STD Clinic: 604-660-7949

Generations Project: 604-684-8449

Victim Services (Monday afternoon): 604-684-5307

PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Vancouver)

www.pflagvancouver.com

604-684-9872, Ext. 2060 or 604-626-5667

Drop-in support for families struggling to come to terms with LGBT issues

Family Services of Greater Vancouver – LGBT Options

604-731-4951; 1616 West 7th Avenue.

Short-term counseling for LGBT people and their family members to address coming-out, relationship/family issues.

Transgender Health Program

604-734-1514

www.vch.ca/transhealth

Information and referral, education, peer support and advocacy, training

Asian Society for the Intervention of AIDS – ASIA

604-669-5567

www.asia.bc.ca

Promoting wellness and health in East and Southeast Asian communities.

Vancouver School Board

Antihomophobia Consultants – Social Responsibility & Diversity Team

pride@vsb.bc.ca

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所有兒童及青少年都應對自己有好感。所有的人都有價值，也應得到禮待。但當很多身邊的人不善待他們，或者相信同性戀者有「不妥」之處時，同性戀青少年很難對自己有好感。很多同性戀青少年由於恐怕家人不能接受，而感到必須隱瞞他們是同性戀的事實。

這小冊子是為有子女表態或預備表態(是同性戀者)的家長及家人而準備的。

如果我相信我的子女對同性人士產生好感，我應怎辦？

要問您自己這個問題，可能需要很大的勇氣。在着手找出答案前，問問您自己為什麼您想知道，這是至關重要的。如果您的子女是同性戀者，這對您來說意味着什麼？為什麼您認為現在應採取一些行動？您的動機是什麼？

問問您自己：與子女談論性的問題，您感到自在嗎？如果您有興趣與您子女談論性的問題，而且感到自在，您認為他或她也已準備好與您談嗎？如果您子女確認是同性戀者，您會做些什麼？

請記住，您選擇的行動或反應可能對他們有某種意思。例如，如果您似乎可以接受新的觀念，您的子女可能覺得您較易接近。另一方面，如果您子女感到他或她的忠誠態度會受到懲罰，他們可能會選擇不向您，而是向別人傾訴。

我子女試圖告訴我有關她/他的性傾向，但我就是不知道如何處理這次對話。我應做些什麼？

子女試圖向您透露他們的性傾向，很可能意味着您對他們很重要，也意味着他們在這種情況下，希望得到您的支持，所以您的反應很可能對您的子女有很重大的影響。

最重要的是您要尊重您子女向您傾訴的決定。所以，讓他或她多發言。您很可能對您子女或您自己有很多問題，嘗試對他們的觀點有更深刻的了解。請記住，您的子女仍然是同一個人；您的子女沒有改變，變的是您對他們的認識。

當您心中存在很多相反的情緒和想法時，要同意您子女的性傾向可能需要一個長的過程。不能期望您能立即了解所有的事物。

我是否做錯了什麼嗎？

很多家長最初發現他們子女對同性有好感時，便會問自己這個問題。這個問題其實有兩部份。首先，作為同性戀者是「不妥」或「違反自然」的。其次，是您對子女的教養「導至」他們成為同性戀者。

很多人覺得同性間愛情的概念違反自然或不妥。有意識的道德判斷或文化及宗教的教誨，令有些人有這樣的感覺。有些人則是因為他們只有甚少關於同性間好感的訊息，而且我們收到的訊息往往是負面或不正確的。

幸而，不安的感覺隨着理解及認識的加深而有所改變。

對子女的性傾向有內疚感或認為應負某些責任的不只您一個人。很多家長集中於找尋他們子女性傾向的「成因」，因為他們認為這是有問題的。對於很多父母，要找出性傾向的成因確實非常困難，而且令人更為迷惑，因為現在並沒有同性戀或異性戀的正式認定成因。

有些家長處理這些感覺的一個方法，是集中探討他們為何和如何認為他們子女的性傾向是一個問題。他們經常發現文化價值觀、社會對同性戀人士的歧視、傳媒所塑造的負面形象、宗教信仰，以及對此課題缺乏認識，很大程度令他們感到意料之外的不安。

別人會怎樣想？我應如何面對家人及朋友？

首先，問問自己為何會如此恐懼或介懷。您的子女在這方面或可給您一些支持，因為她或他大約也曾經歷過類似您目前的情緒問題。

告訴別人有關您子女性傾向所期待的反應可能很難承受。您是否很介懷別人有怎樣的看法？對於很多家長，要告訴別人是很困難和需要很大的勇氣，即使他們本身已接受子女的性傾向，有些人的反應可能是正面，但有些卻可能是負面的。

當您考慮告訴別人時，重要的是您應知道您對您要告訴的對象，以及如何透露與透露的適當時機有一定的控制。您也可與子女談談他們自在的程度，同時也訂出策略，畢竟他們幾乎要不斷思忖這些問題。有些家長發現與其他同性戀兒童的家長分享他們的故事，及聆聽對方的故事對事情有裨益。

我希望抱孫，我的同性戀子女會有小孩嗎？

很多同性伴侶有子女。話雖如此，現今要不要子女已較大幅度是由於個人選擇，而不太由於義務的因素，不管他們的性傾向是什麼。

如果您的子女選擇不生小孩，由於不能傳宗接代的原因，您可能會感到憤怒或失望。這問題令很多同性戀人士同樣感到困擾，因為他們恐怕會令父母或家人失望。您的子女選擇不生小孩會影響到您，雖然他們很可能不是特地要做出傷害您的決定。

我子女會不會因為同性戀而感染到愛滋病？

不會。愛滋病是由一種稱為「人體免疫病毒」(HIV)所感染，HIV能感染不同性傾向及背景的男女。HIV由一個受感染的人通過體液傳染給別人。是否受感染在於他們的行為，而非性傾向。

同性戀人士是否較異性戀人士濫交？

對性關係的一般觀點在各種文化背景間有很大的差異。您可能成長於一個人們通常和第一或第二位發生關係對象結婚的時代和地方。現時在北美，情形不太一樣。北美洲很多移民及非移民家長，現正為他們子女或較開明社會的文化價值觀差異而感到同樣的焦慮。

雖則如此，性活動只不過是同性戀人士生活的一部份。我們永遠應顧及一個人生活的各方面一例如人格、家庭關係、專業或學術成就，以及愛情關係。整體來說，認為同性戀者較異性戀者濫交是不正確的。

同性戀人士有沒有富有意義的關係？他們能真心相愛嗎？

是。您可能擔憂您子女將會孤獨或寂寞，這可能是因為公眾只看到很少同性伴侶的典範。其實，很多人與同性伴侶建立富有意義及充實的關係。愛情關係與伴侶的性別關係不大，這一點已得到廣泛的認同。

父母的愛及支持對維繫任何關係都是非常重要的，同時社區及社會也應給予支持。如果一對伴侶不能很安心地表達互相的愛慕，或者要不斷「隱瞞」，這樣會令他們更難維繫一段堅固的關係。因此，家庭聚會邀請您同性戀子女及其伴侶出席，對他們可能是重要的確認。

在加拿大，您的同性戀子女可以與另一同性人士合法結婚。

我的子女或家庭會不會受到歧視？

《加拿大人權及自由憲章》(Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms)及《卑詩人權法》(British Columbia Human Rights Act)禁止基於性傾向的歧視。意思是由於他人是同性戀而拒絕提供服務、聘用、給予福利及其他對待的行爲屬於違反這些權利。

當然，很多形式的歧視，包括種族歧視仍存在於加拿大 — 儘管法律禁止這種行爲。同性戀人士及其家庭常常經歷對他們的憎惡及恐懼。這種憎惡加上恐懼形成所謂的「同性戀憎惡」(“homophobia”)。

同性戀憎惡有多種形式，從貶低同性戀者身份的笑話，以至拒絕醫院探訪權利及更嚴重的身體騷擾。有些家長及同性戀人士對應付歧視感到無助。但了解到同性戀憎惡事件可以是一種挑戰，可能令人感到鼓舞。很多家長於同性戀憎惡事情出現時發出挑戰，以表示對其同性戀子女的支持。

我子女的學校有否教導關於同性戀的問題？我子女在學校安全嗎？

卑詩省的公校有義務為所有服務的社區創造一個安全及正面的空間，當中包括研究同性戀的問題，作為省教育課程改變的一部份。不同的家庭模式、性傾向、同性戀憎惡及歧視都包括在卑詩省新的「幼兒園至七年級健康及事業」(Health & Career K-7)及「幼兒園至七年級社會學科」(Social Studies K-7)教育課程中。這些課程是卑詩小學生的必修科。中學也在多方面探討這些問題。騷擾及歧視在學校是不能接受的。學校必須採取措施防止所有形式的欺凌、騷擾及歧視，包括同性戀憎惡。您若有任何疑問，請與您子女的校長商議。

社區資源(Community Resources)

同性戀、雙性戀及變性(LGBT)中心

(The (LGBT) Centre), 1170 Bute Street @Davie

www.lgbtcentrevancouver.com 604-684-5307

資料及轉介、教育、朋輩小組、社會支援、康復會議、免費輔導、性病診所

Gab青少年服務 (Gab Youth Services) — 青少年毋需預約造訪、單對單支援、學校的尊嚴演說(PrideSpeaks for schools) : 604-684-4901

同性戀圖書館(Out on Shelves Library) : 604-684-5309

尊嚴專線(Prideline) 每晚7-10 p.m. : 604-684-6869

Bute Street性病診所 (Bute Street STD Clinic) : 604-660-7949

世代計劃(Generations Project) : 604-684-8449

受害人服務中心(Victim Services) (星期一下午) : 604-684-5307

PFLAG : 同性戀者的父母、家人及朋友(溫哥華)

(PFLAG : Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Vancouver))

www.pflagvancouver.com

604-684-9872 內線2060或604-626-5667

為努力接受LGBT問題的家庭提供毋需預約支援。

大溫地區家庭服務 — LGBT選擇

(Family Services of Greater Vancouver — LGBT Options)

604-731-4951 ; 1616 West 7th Avenue

為LGBT人士及其家人提供短期輔導，解決表態、關係/家庭的問題。

變性健康計劃

(Transgender Health Program)

604-734-1514

www.vch.ca/transhealth

資料及轉介、教育、朋輩支援及爭取、培訓

介入愛滋病亞洲協會(ASIA)

(Asian Society for the Intervention of AIDS - ASIA)

604-669-5567

www.asia.bc.ca

促進東亞及東南亞社區的安好及健康。

溫哥華學校局

(Vancouver School Board)

反同性戀憎惡輔導員 — 社會責任及多樣性小組

(Antihomophobia Consultants — Social Responsibility & Diversity Team)

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