

# STRONG FAMILY ALLIANCE

SAVING LIVES. PRESERVING FAMILIES.

## 10 Tips for Coming Out as a Parent of an LGBTQ Child

National Parents Coming Out Day is October 12. Held the day after National Coming Out Day on October 11, it's a day when parents can show support for their LGBTQ child.

When an LGBTQ child comes out, parent reactions may vary from acceptance, to shock, to worry and concern. However, what very few parents know is how pivotal their reactions are to the future health and safety of their child. When a child comes out to parents, the reaction they get is a key predictor for their future health and safety. Rates for suicide, depression, drug use and homelessness escalate dramatically with rejection by the parent.

Even parents that want to help their child are sometimes unsure what actions to take. It's important to know there are many positive steps, but even more important is making sure the parent's steps match the child's needs and desires. In "coming out," it's important to remember the child is the one who will bear the scrutiny, the questions, and the judgement or acceptance. It's essential parents *do not "out" children beyond their wishes.*

Each of the ten ways to "come out" fall within these two main categories:

- **Speaking up: Independent Actions**

- **Definition:** Parents and allies that speak and act in many ways that let their community and their child know that they hold an inclusive view of LGBTQ people
- **Why:** This is showing support, whether you have an LGBTQ loved one or not. These actions help any LGBTQ person know it's safe to talk to you.
- **Timing:** Any time

- **Telling others: Coordinated With Your Child**

- **Definition:** Telling friends, family, or anyone in your community that your child identifies as LGBTQ. This is more complex and must be *coordinated* with your child. Ask permission! .
- **Why:** This is a way to support your child, find support yourself, and become an advocate.
- **Timing:** Depends on your child's comfort level. It may take years for you and your child to become completely open -- or that may never occur. Talk with your child about who to tell and when and stay in their comfort zone.

Below you'll find 50 examples of things you can try!

### Speaking Up - Independent Actions

These actions are about coming out as an ally and can be done by anyone -- you don't have to be a parent. But they help a child know you are safe to talk to and they help change the community.

Role	Actions	Examples
<b>1. Be a Non-Participant</b>	<b>Refuse to participate in subtle or overt LGBTQ disparagement</b>	Do not use negative language, tease, or make disrespectful jokes.
		Disengage, change the subject or walk away from disparaging conversations.
<b>2. Show an Inclusive Attitude</b>	<b>Make proactive efforts to discuss LGBTQ people and ideas.</b>	Avoid silence. Silence makes LGBTQ topics seem taboo.
	<b>Find opportunities to talk about LGBT people or issues in positive ways</b>	Talk about LGBTQ individuals you know and what you admire about them (co-workers, friends, relatives, etc.).
		Discuss news stories or current events around LGBTQ issues (gay marriage, bathroom bills, discrimination, health issues, news, etc.).
<b>3. Engage in Outreach</b>	<b>Establish relationships with the LGBTQ community in your sphere</b>	Encourage LGBTQ youth you encounter through sports, friendships, and school. Be friendly to these youth as you would to any others.
		Engage LGBTQ individuals at work, school, or other places in ordinary conversation about interests, hobbies, family, work and even the weather.
		Extend invitations to shared activities, such as inviting a neighbor and his partner to dinner or a movie, or asking someone to join a league or group activity (sports, music, gardening, cooking etc.).

<b>5. Come Out in a Private or Anonymous Space</b>	<b>Learn all you can</b>	Get factual information, resources and suggestions from supportive websites such as <a href="http://strongfamilyalliance.org">strongfamilyalliance.org</a> , which offers basic information and pointers to extensive <a href="#">Resources</a> for books, videos, blogs and articles.
		Seek out stories to better understand parent and LGBTQ experiences in <a href="#">Family Stories</a> and in the excellent documentary, <a href="#">Anyone and Everyone</a> .
	<b>Share your own story in an anonymous way</b>	Add your story anonymously online at <a href="#">Family Stories</a> .
	<b>Find confidential, private support</b>	Work with an affirming therapist.
		Talk with supportive, accepting clergy.
		Join a support group such as PFLAG.
	<b>5. Take a Stand</b>	<b>Confront other's negative word/actions</b>
Push back on your child’s (or sibling’s or relative’s) negative comments and discuss your disapproval with your child.		
Point out negative, biased or stereotypical roles, statements, or behavior in the media.		
<b>Be a public advocate</b>		Donate to organizations that promote LGBTQ rights.
		Vote for inclusive public office holders.
		Participate in demonstrations in your area.
		Encourage your place of worship to support LGBTQ members.

## Coordinated Actions

These actions depend on how open your child is and how open they feel you should be as a parent. We've grouped them by common situations, but talk with your child to determine how, where, and when you can come out to others about your LGBTQ child. **REMEMBER:**

- It's not your story to tell. You may not feel the scrutiny, but your child will.
- Keep pace with your child. His or her comfort level is most important.
- Get permission. Ask before you share with a particular person (even your sibling or best friend).
- Judge your audience. Will they break confidence or gossip?

Situation	Actions	Examples
<b>6. Child Is Only Out To You</b>	<b>Respect their confidential information</b>	However emotional you are, respect your child's privacy. Take time to find your balance and gather helpful information.
	<b>Be an ally</b>	See the independent actions above, and pursue all you can.
		Help your child envision a hopeful and positive future. Be their optimist and encourager.
	<b>Educate yourself</b>	This is essential, and there are many <a href="#">Resources</a> .
	<b>Help your child connect with positive LGBTQ resources</b>	Many online resources are available from <a href="#">PFLAG</a> , <a href="#">GSLEN</a> , the <a href="#">Human Rights Campaign</a> and the <a href="#">Centers for Disease Control</a> .
		Look for local resources that might provide friendships or connections for your child when they are ready such as <a href="#">GSA Clubs</a> or other youth-focused groups
	<b>Find a confidential &amp; supportive space</b>	Join a support group such as <a href="#">PFLAG</a> or the many affirming <a href="#">faith based resources</a>
		Work with an affirming therapist.
		Talk with accepting clergy.

	<b>Tell your story</b>	Post your anonymous story on our website at <a href="#">Family Stories</a> .
<b>7. Child Has Told A Trusted Few</b>	<b>Keep pace</b>	Don't ask you child to stretch and don't hold them back.
	<b>If asked, be willing to help tell others</b>	Help your child tell someone else <i>if your child wants your help</i> . You may be part of the conversation or you may be sent as a messenger.
	<b>Ask permission if you want to tell someone</b>	For someone your child knows well, such as a relative or close friend, it's essential your child agrees. It's their relationship too.
	<b>Ask how you can help</b>	Sometimes they want help and other times not. It's important to ask so they stay in control.
	<b>Keep the conversation flowing</b>	Ask normal questions about life, school, work, and friends. Don't make everything about being LGBTQ.
	<b>Keep your worries to yourself</b>	Find a trusted resource to talk with, but don't lay your fears on your child.
	<b>8. Child Is Out To Some Family Or Friends</b>	<b>Be a welcoming home</b>
<b>Find your comfort zone</b>		Practice talking about this change until you have the words comfortably down.
<b>Ask your child how to handle questions</b>		Find out how they answer and parallel them.
<b>Be a buffer if needed</b>		Hold steady if someone else such as a relative is emotional or critical. Don't let them grill your child.
<b>Discuss possible gossip</b>		Help your child be realistic that others may talk. That may be good or bad –

		take your cue from your child.
	<b>Get your statements and answers down pat</b>	Find positive, affirming ways to answer if someone asks or implies something. You are an ally – act like it.
<b>9. Child Is Progressively Open</b>	<b>Grow with your child</b>	Be more open as your child is more open. Make it ordinary. Talk easily about this as you would any other topics such as school, activities, sports, etc.
	<b>Be ready for dating and relationships</b>	Try to apply consistent guidelines about dating, especially if other children are in the home. Typical curfews, activities and boundaries are still appropriate.
		There may be open affection. Try to think “if they were an opposite sex couple would this bother me?”
	<b>Make your home a destination</b>	Not only will you know your child’s friends, you can become a friend to others whose families may be rejecting.
<b>10. Both You and Your Child Are Out</b>	<b>Take a public stand</b>	Join one of the many support and advocacy groups
	<b>Advocate</b>	Speak for LGBTQ rights. Be a public voice when possible.
	<b>Help other families and youth</b>	Support or help your school start a GSA Club
		Recommend GLSEN resources to teachers and school counselors
		Be available to parents with a child coming out as a support. Help them find resources and information.

A simple step we invite you to take on **Parent Coming Out Day** or anytime is to share your personal story anonymously at **Family Stories**.

This has several benefits:

- ***It's completely private*** -- You can share your experience anonymously.
- ***It helps you practice telling your story*** -- Sometimes reading our own stories gives us insight and practice telling our story that can be helpful as we eventually talk with others.
- ***It becomes a resource for others*** - Parents visiting our pages can find stories from parents in similarly sized towns, geography, or family situation. You can be a help and encouragement to others.

With your child's permission, you can post on social media, using sample posts provided by Strong Family Alliance. Click one of these [Facebook Photo Albums](#) to easily share a post, whether you're a [parent of LGBTQ](#), [an LGBTQ person](#), or [a supportive organization or ally](#). [More sample text posts](#) are available as well.

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