So, you've decided to come out? A guide to coming out to your parents.
This journey is going to be interesting to navigate. For some of you, your family is open to the news that you are gay. For others, the thought of coming out to your family is really, really hard.

Before we share more with you — know this:

- You are supported.
- You matter.
- You are loved.

This guide is a safe place for you and your parents. Please share it with them.

With some people in your life, telling them you’re gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer will feel casual and easy, while with others the conversation may feel like a game-changer.

This guide offers ideas for coming out to parents, because this usually feels like one of those “big deal” moments. But these tips can help you think through how talk to anyone about your sexual orientation or gender identity, whether at work, school or with friends.
One question we ask parents is,

“Knowing what you know today, would you want your child to ‘stay in the closet’?”

The answer over and over is “No.” But that doesn’t mean there was no struggle before getting to acceptance.

As the person coming out, you’ve been thinking about your LGBTQ identity for years, but it can take time for parents to adjust.

The good news is that being honest and real with your parents can build a better relationship — eventually. And you will feel relieved no matter what. The bad news is that coming out can be tough, and there’s stress knowing the conversation can go many ways.

This guide shares ideas about how to come out, responses depending on how people react and resources for both you and your parents.
Here are some things to think about before you tell, as well as a script to help you have the conversation and some ways to handle your parents’ (and others’) reactions.

**THINK AHEAD ABOUT HOW YOU WANT TO COME OUT**

**PLAN FOR SAFETY, AND ANTICIPATE CONSEQUENCES.**

**HAVE A BACKUP PLAN.**

- If you are living with your parents, or are financially dependent, consider the risks before you come out to your parents. What is the worst case scenario? Will you need a place to stay? Will you be able to support yourself if needed? Will you be physically safe?
- If your worst case scenario is really bad, this may not be the time.
- If you are living apart from parents and are financially independent, this is less of a consideration.

**KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR PARENTS ARE IN A DIFFERENT PLACE THAN YOU ON THIS PATH.**

- You have been thinking about this for months or years, but it may be a surprise to your parents. They will need time, just as you have, to adjust to this news.
- Most parents go through stages similar to suffering a loss, and they must process this news. It may take a long time for them to become accepting and supportive as they adjust and change their view of the family and your future.
GET READY FOR A WIDE RANGE OF REACTIONS.

- Your parents could be relieved, understanding, loving, affectionate and supportive when you come out. Or, they could be shocked, sad, confused, angry or condemning. Or anything in between.
- Their reaction in this conversation will not be their final reaction, no matter how positive or negative it is. It will change over time.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME.

- Things will be easier if your relationship with your parent is in a good place when you come out and you are not in arguments about other things.
- Listen to your instincts about when they are ready to know.
- Choose a moment that is private, calm and not rushed.

KEEP IT SHORT.

- If the conversation becomes too intense or emotional, it is OK to end it.
- This is the first conversation; there will be many. You probably will not be able to answer every question, comfort every concern, resolve every worry on day one.
- Remember, the goal is to share your news and communicate that you are telling them because you love and respect them and want to be honest.

PLAN WHAT YOU WILL SAY.

- Sharing difficult news is challenging. Our script on the next few pages gives you ideas of the words to say.
- Consider writing down thoughts before you have this conversation.
"I want to tell you something"
"I need to talk to you when you get home tonight about something."
"Do you have time to talk? I’ve got something on my mind."

"You might not like it."
"You might be surprised."
"This is hard for me to say and might be hard for you to hear..."

"Could you just hear me out?"
"Please don’t freak out."
"I need you to keep this between us until I’m ready."

"I’m gay/bisexual/pansexual/lesbian/transgender/queer"
"I’m attracted to (or not attracted to)...
"I’ve always felt/known...
"I’m dating/want to date/in a relationship with..."
“This is really hard for me because it is so personal.”
“It has been so difficult hiding who I really am.”
“I haven’t said this before because…”
“I want to have a good relationship with you and be honest.”
“I want you to know I’ve thought about this for years/months/forever.”
“I’ve been afraid to tell you for so long.”
“Please know I’m sharing this because I love and respect you.”
“I don’t want to lie to you.”

“I don’t want to go into a big thing right now, but I did want to tell you”
“I’d like to talk more about it after you have some time”
“I don’t want to talk about this more now but I wanted you to know”
“I can’t answer all your questions but I wanted to tell you”
“I can see you’re upset, so I want to give you some time”
“I love you and I’m relieved that you know”
HOW TO RESPOND IF...

THINGS GO WELL.
Communicate love and appreciation.

- “I love you so much.”
- “Being honest is important to me; it’s been hard to keep this from you.”
- “Thank you for...”

YOUR PARENT HAS QUESTIONS, IS CONFUSED, IS WORRIED.
Empathize and offer information.

- “I’ve been thinking about this a long time; I know it will take you some time”
- “I can tell you whatever you want to know.”
- “I don’t have all the answers.”
- “There are some resources for parents that can tell you more than I can. I’ll share them.”

YOUR PARENT IS ANGRY, UPSET OR CONDEMNING.
Reassure, set a boundary, or end the conversation.

- “I know you’re worried/angry, but I still love you.”
- “I’m still the same kid you’ve always known.”
- “I need your help.”
- “I hope you will always love and accept me for who I am.”
- “I hope you change your mind.”
- “I know you’re angry, I don’t want to keep fighting.”
- “I’m leaving, but I will be back for dinner.”
- “I need to step away from this conversation now, but we can come back to it later.”
- “I’m going take a break/I need to stop for now.”
It may be helpful to know many initial reactions stem from fear and misinformation – fear of what you will face in society, fear they may have done something wrong as a parent, fear of what others will think of them or you, as well as the enormous amount of misinformation around LGBTQ.

You may not be able to answer all their questions, and you also deserve to preserve some privacy about your feelings and activities. But they will need good information and guidance, and you can help them find it.

Providing resources can take many forms:

- A conversation
- A list
- Text (or several)
- An email
- A book
- Conversation with an accepting family member you trust who might talk with them

If they seem open, you may be able to share resources quickly, or you may want to wait till later when things cool down, or even share a “drip campaign” of resources over time.
There are several excellent resources for you and for parents, but their approaches vary greatly. Some of the best are quite political and may not be the best first step. Review options while thinking of your parents’ perspective, and then choose what to recommend.

**NON-POLITICAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS**

- **Strongfamilyalliance.org** – Our main site focused on helping parents become informed allies and supporters. Especially helpful for parents who just learned your identity and/or who are struggling.

- **Parent Support Guides email Series** - We offer two 5-part Parent Guides, one for transgender and one for LGBQ. These arrive by email once a week and provide information and guidance in manageable segments. This can help parents become informed, find their new balance and offload you from educating them. They can subscribe — or you could subscribe for them and use it as a ‘drip’ campaign if they are open to the idea.

- **Family Acceptance Project** – Dr. Caitlin Ryan’s research with lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults, includes booklets and videos for families about how to support a child who has just come out (as well as ramifications if they aren’t accepting).

- **Freedhearts.org** – Focused on Christian or Evangelical parents, helpful for finding support and reconciling faith issues.
OUR MOST VISITED PAGES

Below are some of the pages parents visit most on our website. If your parents are receptive, these might be good as part of a “drip” campaign — sending helpful information to them over time.

- The Stages of Coming Out at Any Age
- Parent Guide for LGBQ
- Parent Guide for Transgender
- Resources – Books
- Resources – Videos, Articles, News

POLITICAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

These are great resources, but the main websites are often quite political. In addition, they strongly advocate for all aspects of LGBTQ. If your parents are conservative or not accepting, we suggest you preview the sites and share links to specific pages rather than referring them to the main websites.

- PFLAG.org Family Information – PFLAG.org is one of the largest LGBTQ advocacy groups. The more general (and less political) parent/family resources are at https://pflag.org/family.

- PFLAG Support Groups – your parents live in a larger city, you can search by zip code to find a https://pflag.org/find-a-chaptersupport group for parents and youth.

- HRC.org – The Human Rights Campaign works to change laws and end discrimination against LGBTQ.
MORE NON-POLITICAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- **Faith-Based Organizations** – Almost every denomination or faith has groups that support LGBTQ. Find a link in this list that might help your parents reconcile faith concerns.

- **So Your Child Just Came Out** – Two-minute animated video for parents.

- **Lead with Love** – An excellent 35-minute documentary focused on the struggle of parents to accept their child and the benefits of leading with love. It addresses many parent struggles and questions through the voices of parents, youth and researchers.

- **Anyone and Everyone** – A film featuring parents from a wide range of religions, ethnicities, and political leanings, all of whom discuss their initial reactions to their child’s coming out. While some showed unconditional support, others struggled with their child’s sexual orientation, fearing alienation from their extended family, their church, or their community. (57 min.)

- **Centers for Disease Control Resources on LGBTQ Health** – This page introduces risks and health issues and links to many more resources.
RESOURCES FOR YOU

- **A Resource Guide to Coming Out** – This brochure from HRC gives information on coming out and shares additional resources.

- **Other coming out resource guides** – Search HRC.org under "coming out guides" for links to information that address specific situations and aspects of coming out, including in varied races, cultures, identities, and religions, as well as coming out in healthcare and the workplace.

- **Should you come out to your parents** – This Psychology Today article may be helpful for those undecided about coming out.

- **How to come out to your parents** – This article from WikiHow gives many suggestions for coming out.

- **LGBTQIA+ Youth Resource** – An extensive list of online resources LBGTQ+ for counseling, education, finding community, local organizations and more.

- **Faith & religion resources** – Find resources pertaining to religions and faith groups, including coming out issues for various ethnicities.

- **Resources for LGBTQ travelers** – Information on finding safe and inclusive destinations, discrimination, availability of gender-neutral bathrooms, presenting identification documents when you are gender non-conforming, getting medical attention, passing TSA screenings and more.
FOR MORE RESOURCES & COMMUNITY SUPPORT VISIT...

STRONG FAMILY ALLIANCE

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