

LGBTQ Health

Behavioral Health Tips

Scientific literature strongly suggests that sexuality and gender identification is coded before birth and exist on a continuum. At different times in an individual's life, they can have different sexuality and/or gender identifications, depending on a variety of internal and environmental factors. One important aspect of maturing is forming one's sexual identity. All children explore and experiment sexually as part of normal development. This sexual behavior may be with members of the same or opposite sex. For many adolescents, thinking about and/or experimenting with people of the same sex may cause concerns and anxiety regarding their sexual orientation. For others, even thoughts or fantasies may cause anxiety. These feelings and behavior do not necessarily mean an individual is homosexual or bisexual.

Definitions:

Heterosexual: An individual that identifies as being sexually attracted to members of the opposite biologic sex.

Homosexual: An individual that identifies as being sexually attracted to members of the same biologic sex.

Heteronormative: a set of common cultural expectations and fluency predicated on assumptions that individuals are heterosexual and *de jure* engage in heterosexual behaviors.

Gay: A term that describes either males in particular or any individual who identifies as being sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Lesbian: A term that describes individuals that identify as female and identify as being sexually attracted to other females.

Bi-sexual: Individuals that identify as being sexually attracted to both members of their same biologic sex and to members of the opposite biologic sex.

Transgender: Individuals who identify as a different gender than the biologic sex in which they were born

Cis-gender: individuals who identify as the same gender as the biologic sex in which they were born.

For more information

Cohen Children's Medical Center

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Rockville Centre

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Pediatric Behavioral Health- Mineola

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516-321-5770

How Parents Can Help:

Parents need to clearly understand that sexual orientation is not a mental disorder. The cause(s) of homosexuality or bisexuality are not fully understood. However, a person's sexual orientation is not a matter of choice. In other words, individuals have no more choice about being homosexual or bisexual than heterosexual. All teenagers do have a choice about their sexual behaviors, regardless of their sexual orientation. It can be very difficult to identify as homosexual or as a different gender than one's biologic sex. As much as society has changed significantly over recent years, LGBTQ individuals continue to suffer from bullying and mistreatment in school and in social settings. Parents of these individuals should attempt to help their children feel as comfortable as possible and be very attentive to changes in their children's behavior that can be consistent with bullying or developing psychologic illnesses. Parents may have difficulty accepting their teen's sexuality for some of the same reasons that the youngster wants to keep it secret. Gay, lesbian, or bisexual adolescents should be allowed to decide when and to whom to disclose their homosexuality. Announcing a person's

sexuality before they are ready is called "outing" and can be traumatic. Parents and other family members may gain

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understanding and support from organizations such as Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

Treatments:

Mainline pediatric and psychiatric professionals do not support any treatments that attempt to change an individual's sexual or gender identity. Treatments focus on providing additional support to children as they grow and mature and learn more about who they are. Just like any other children, some LGBTQ youths develop depression, anxiety, or other mood symptoms and these symptoms can be treated by licensed mental health providers and psychiatrists with a combination of medications and therapy.

Additional Information:

- 1) Suicide hotline, awareness, and prevention: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- 2) CDC General LGBT Youth resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm>
- 3) It Gets Better Project: <https://itgetsbetter.org/stories/>
- 4) Bullying awareness and prevention: <https://www.stopbullying.gov>
- 5) The Long Island LGBT Community Center: <https://lgbtnetwork.org/the-center>
- 6) Queens LGBT Community Center: <https://lgbtnetwork.org/q-center>
- 7) Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth: <https://lgbtnetwork.org/ligaly>
- 8) PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People)
 - a. <http://www.pflagnyc.org/>
 - b. <http://www.pflagli.org/>
- 9) The Parents Project is a first-of-its-kind digital presence, inclusive of videos, advice, and resources, dedicated exclusively toward helping parents understand their LGBTQ kids. <http://mykidisgay.com/>
- 10) <https://www.strongfamilyalliance.org/support-and-resources/books/>

Books:

1. Unconditional: A Guide to Loving and Supporting Your LGBTQ Child By Telaina Eriksen
2. Always My Child: A Parent's Guide to Understanding Your Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Questioning Son or Daughter by Kevin Jennings
3. This Is a Book for Parents of Gay Kids: A Question & Answer Guide to Everyday Life By Danielle Owens-Reid & Kristin Russo
4. The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens By Stephanie Brill