



SUPPORTING YOUR LGBTQIA+ CHILD



Thank you for reading this handout. Just by picking this up, you have shown a willingness to learn more and support your LGBTQ+ child, and that matters. We created this handout for parents and caregivers who want to create an inclusive environment in their homes, regardless of your children's orientation and gender. Here, you will find suggestions for respectfully communicating with your LGBTQ+ child and tips for demonstrating your support of their identity.

Creating an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Environment and Building Trust

“Many children have a sense of who they are attracted to by the age of 12 or 13 and many have a stable sense of their gender identity by age 5. LGBTQ+ children are likely to be watching and listening for signs that their family members and friends are LGBTQ+ supportive. Below are some suggestions for establishing an LGBTQ+ inclusive and supportive environment. If your child is LGBTQ+ you will be modeling respect and opening the door for them to share their identity with you. If your child is not LGBTQ+, what a powerful message you will be giving them about dignity and respect for all!”

- 1) **Tell your child you love them.** Tell them over and over. It never gets old.
- 2) **Choose LGBTQ+-themed books and movies.** Read books to your young child about all kinds of people and families, and where all types of gender roles and expressions are represented. Get “caught” reading an LGBTQ+ themed book yourself or watching an LGBTQ+ themed movie to help stimulate conversations about diversity and inclusion.
- 3) **Take a stand.** LGBTQ+ issues are in the news now more than ever before. Strike up a conversation the next time a news story covers something LGBTQ+ related and express your support.
- 4) **Show your pride.** Grab a rainbow flag and go to the annual Pride Parade or Pride Festival!
- 5) **Un-gender your language. Un-gender your language.** Don't assume gender or orientations when you talk with students (or anyone for that matter). Ask, “Do you have a date for the dance?” or “Are you going to the movie with anyone special?” Use friends, folks, or team, instead of dudes, ladies, or guys.

Responding When Your Child Comes Out to You

Whether or not it feels like a big deal to you, coming out to parents is typically a really big deal for a child. If your child comes out to you give yourself a pat on the back. It likely means that you have successfully indicated that you are a safe and LGBTQ+ supportive person. Below are some suggestions for responding after the big reveal.

Don't ...

Ask if your child is sure or imply that it might just be a phase. Even if you truly think that this might just be a phase, stating it is unlikely to be received well or help your child. For now, it's their reality and it should be respected. Simply support them as they navigate their journey of self-understanding.

Ask when they "decided" to be LGBTQ+. Just as straight or cisgender people (i.e., people who are not transgender) didn't choose or decide to be straight or cisgender, LGBTQ+ people didn't choose their identities. The only thing your child is choosing is to live and love authentically.

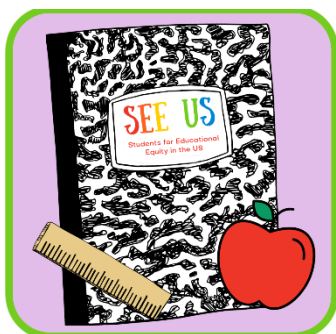
Tell your child that you already knew (even if you did). You may be pleased by your expert sleuthing but keep it to yourself. Hearing that you already knew may make your child feel foolish or cowardly for waiting so long, diminish the importance of the information they want to share with you, cause them to wonder what they did to make it so obvious, and make them worry that others can also tell.

Do ... Say "thank you." It is a compliment when someone comes out to you. You might say, "Thank you for trusting me enough to let me know," or "Thank you for caring so much about our relationship."

Listen. Let your child take the lead on what they want to talk about. They may, in fact, not want to talk about anything. It may just be a huge relief to tell you and know that they are supported. If there is an awkward silence you could throw in one or two of these comments: "I'm so glad you can be yourself around me," "I want you to know that I'm here for you," or "This calls for a celebration! Should I bake a cake?"

Ask them how you can best support them. Your child is your best guide to understanding what they need from you. They may have books they want you to read, terms they want you to understand, and even a new name and new pronouns they may ask you to use.

Keep confidentiality in mind. Never out your child to others unless they ask you to. If it doesn't come up naturally in the conversation, you may want to ask about your child's plans for telling others. See if there's anything they would like you to do to help. If your child is asking you to use a new name and new pronouns, it will be critical to discuss when and where the new name and pronouns should be used. Clarifying how your child would like you to navigate the use of a new name and pronouns will show how committed you are to supporting them and keeping them safe.



This flyer is presented courtesy of Students for Educational Equity in the United States. SEE US was founded in 2020 to offer support to students and families who face challenges accessing a safe and inclusive educational experience. For more information, visit <https://studentsforeducationalequity.org>

Thank you to Savvy Ally Action for the following information. Visit <https://www.savvyallyaction.com> for more resources and information. Portions of this information were taken from

The Savvy Ally: A Guide for Becoming a Skilled LGBTQ+ Advocate.