



Children's Mental Health Matters!

Facts for Families

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth

Definitions

GLBT/LGBT is a collective term to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people.

A **lesbian** is a female who is exclusively emotionally, sexually, romantically and/or aesthetically attracted to other females.

The term **gay** is used to refer to same-sex sexual orientation (both male and female).

The term **bisexual** is the human sexual orientation that refers to the aesthetic, romantic or sexual desire for people of either gender or of either sex.

Transgender is an overarching term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviors and groups involving tendencies that diverge from the normative gender role (women or men) commonly, but not always, assigned at birth, as well as the role traditionally held by society.

The process of "**coming out**" describes the voluntary public announcement of one's (often homosexual or bisexual) sexual orientation, sexual attractions, or gender identity.

👏 "**Being out**" is when an individual does not try to hide these characteristics.

👏 "**Being outed**" occurs when these characteristics are made public against one's wishes or against one's consent.

If an individual is said to be "**questioning**," it most often means that they are going through a phase of exploration and possible transition regarding his/her sexual orientation. Another definition is that the "**questioning**" period is the initial phase prior to "coming out."

Homophobia is the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals. It can also mean hatred or disapproval of homosexual

people, their lifestyles, sexual behaviors or cultures, and is generally used to assert bigotry.

Why do we care?

GLBT students:

- 👏 Are far more likely to skip classes and drop out of school.
- 👏 Are at a higher risk for substance abuse.
- 👏 Are subjected to harassment, violent threats, physical/sexual assault, slurs, insults, and jokes (the average high school student hears 25 anti-gay slurs daily).
- 👏 Are more prone to depression and loneliness.
- 👏 Attempt suicide 2 to 3 times more frequently than their heterosexual peers.

What can you do about it?

- 👏 **Get your questions answered.** There are many books, articles and internet resources on the topic of GLBT youth. In addition, support groups are available for parents and family members of GLBT youth, and can offer support and education.
- 👏 **If homosexuality is a difficult topic**, consider therapy. Many parents blame themselves or feel ashamed. Support groups are available to share experiences with other parents of GLBT youth.
- 👏 **Be sensitive to language and jokes.** Don't allow discriminatory behavior to occur in your child's presence.
- 👏 **Ask your child about their experiences in school.** Ensure that they are in a safe place. Schools can be a big source of difficulty for GLBT youth. Identify faculty and staff that are allies and can provide a positive atmosphere for your child while s/he is at school.
- 👏 **Get involved in the GLBT community.** Support organizations that take a stand against discrimination. Help your child feel proud of who they are, attend meetings and celebrations with them to show your support.

Facts for Families

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Continued

Resources/Links

Resource for parents whose child has recently come out: <http://www.bidstrup.com/parents.htm>

The author of this site is willing to speak directly with parents regarding GLBT issues.

PFLAG has dedicated itself to provide support, education and advocacy for GLBT individuals and those close to them.

www.pflag.org

Brochure for parents of GLBT Youth includes commonly asked questions, addresses concerns that many parents have, stories from other parents, as well as positive religious outlooks on homosexuality:

www.outproud.org/brochure_for_parents.html

This site has useful information including common myths, and statistics regarding GLBT individuals.

www.gayfamilysupport.com

<http://members.tripod.com/~twood/guide.html> is a resource guide for different strategies to keep schools safe for GLBT students.

<http://www.lambda.org/youth.htm> is a website designed specifically for GLBT youth. It includes information about how to handle bullying and discrimination as well as safe places and activities for GLBT youth.

**Adapted from Resources found on:
www.schoolmentalhealth.org March 2009**