



Tips for Parents: Gay or Lesbian Parents

As homosexuality becomes more widely accepted, more children are born to or openly raised by gay fathers or lesbian mothers. While this issue still remains very controversial for many, millions of children and families are living it day to day. Here's what experts and recent research have to say about it's affect on kids.

The Research

A number of smaller studies have been done on children raised by gay or lesbian parents. While most experts in the area agree that more research is necessary to make widespread conclusions, and groups against gay marriage and/or parenting find fault with the studies, several large and prominent organizations have stated that children raised by gay parents are just as likely to be happy and successful as children raised by straight parents—adding that what makes the most difference is a loving home. Additionally, research also supports the position that children raised by gay or lesbian parents are no more likely to become homosexual than children raised by straight parents. These organizations include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychiatric Association and others.

The research does show that many children of gay parents do experience increased teasing or bullying by peers, but that most of these children are able to “surmount” this negativity.

Raising Children in a Gay Family

Some gays or lesbians may be apprehensive about raising a child. They may be concerned about difficulties the child may face as a result of many people's feelings against homosexuality. Others worry that their sexuality may confuse or hinder their child's development.

Below are several tips experts recommend for gay parents:

Answer Questions Appropriately By Age

All kids are curious about their origins and may have questions about their birth parents if adopted or if one or both aren't active in their life. Kids may also have questions about your sexuality, their sexuality, or how society perceives your sexual orientation. They may wonder what to say to friends, how a civil union is different than a straight marriage, and much more.

Most experts agree that it is best to answer kids' questions in a patient, straightforward way that is appropriate for their age and maturity level. Avoid information overload, and ask if you have answered their questions completely. Encourage kids to come back to you whenever they have more questions.

If a child asks a question that makes you uncomfortable, you may consider asking someone else to answer it for them. Kids don't have to know every detail, and you may or may not feel that what they're asking invades your privacy. Remind them that everyone has a right to their own privacy, especially when it comes to matters that don't directly involve or affect the child.

Respect Feelings

Children raised by a gay parent or couple differ in their feelings about the situation. When grown, many have said that they felt just as loved and happy as any other child. Others have expressed fear of peers finding out, and some disliked being "different" than other kids. Children have a right to their own feelings, and this should be respected, even if you disagree. However, it is recommended that children be taught to express their feelings in a polite and respectful way.

Meet Their Needs

Children of gay parents have the same needs as children of straight parents. They need to:

- Feel loved
- Feel accepted unconditionally
- Have their physical needs met
- Spend quality time with loved ones
- Be supported and encouraged

As a parent, it is your responsibility to make certain your child's needs are met and that they feel loved, accepted and valued by you.

Teach Them

Children learn tolerance and respect for others by watching people they love and respect model those behaviors. Take the time to talk to your kids about the importance of diversity and treating others kindly and with respect—even if they differ in opinion. Make sure your attitude towards others conveys the message you are trying to teach your children.

Teach Others

While some people are openly and knowingly derogatory, many people are unaware that the things they say or the ways their institutions function discriminate against homosexuals. As a gay or lesbian parent, you may have a unique opportunity to encourage your child's school, library, church or doctor's office to support your family and others by talking openly on the topic and by providing or suggesting educational materials.

Share Time with Those in Common

Because acceptance is important to children, have your family spend time with others in which you have much in common.

For More Information:

[HealthyChildren.org's Gay and Lesbian Parents](http://HealthyChildren.org's%20Gay%20and%20Lesbian%20Parents)

[Child Welfare Information Gateway's Gay and Lesbian Adoptive Parents: Resources for Professionals and Parents](#)

[Research from the American Psychiatric Association on Lesbian and Gay Parenting](#)

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