

## Topic

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### Siblings and Other Family Members

- You love and support your LGBTQ+ child. But, one of your parents, in-laws, or siblings do not support your child. What to do?
- Ask your child if they would like to be out to extended family. If the answer is no, you have nothing to worry about right now. Honor your child's wishes and stay quiet. If their answer is yes, ...
- Rally your allies. You know who in your family empathizes with LGBTQ+ people. Tell them first. Email might be the easiest for some families, calling for others, or visits, whatever you need to get the conversation started.
- Depending on your child's age and how close they are with some of these allies, you may want them to reach out as well. Check with your child about this too.
- If you don't know how certain family members feel, float a "weather balloon". Sometimes we make a mistake of stereotyping people based on external factors like their age or religion - you might be pleasantly surprised. So, talk to these people about something that is in the news pertaining to LGBTQ+ issues. See what they say.
- Identify the people in your family who are flat-out homophobic. If the family member is someone you see frequently, schedule time to visit or call. At a bare minimum, this member must agree to not openly mock, shame, or even question your child. If that member cannot agree to this, then you probably shouldn't go to Thanksgiving dinner. I know this is harsh, but you have to send a message that your child is more important than the family member.
- You can try to educate. However, this can become exhausting, and you can't educate anyone who doesn't want to be educated. You can offer your knowledge and resources to your relatives. You can give them movies, books, and articles. But, you can't make them read them or watch them.
- But there are people who maybe just haven't been exposed to a lot of differences. And, with these people, education can make a big difference.
- For siblings, don't forget that your straight child may be feeling some repercussions at school or in the family. They may be getting teased. They may experience shame or guilt. It can be hard for them too. Be sure to talk to them about what's going on, and monitor their individual situations and circumstances at school as well.

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### Suggested Do's and Don'ts

- 1) Do expect the best and prepare for the worst, especially if your child is the first out queer person in the family.
- 2) Do give people space and time. If family members act poorly at first or say something stupid, circle back around to them in a bit to see if they are in the same place. They may be sorry and not know what to do now that they've behaved badly.
- 3) Do offer resources.

## Support Group for Queer Youth

- 4) Don't let Uncle Ralph make homophobic jokes or engage in bullying behavior at family gatherings. Confront that behavior, even if the confrontation is awkward and painful. If Uncle Ralph continues his behavior, remove your child from that situation.
- 5) Don't forget to take care of yourself. The primary caretaker and "family maker" can be exhausting and depleting on top of working and the everyday tasks of adulthood. In a rough situation with a family member, remember to breath, exercise, mind your nutrition, and try to get adequate sleep. You need to be deathly and sane, and your child needs you to be healthy and sane.