

Supportive and Non-Supportive Family Behaviors that Might Occur in Response to a Child's Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or Gender Expression.

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Non-Supportive Family Behaviors	Supportive Family Behaviors
<p>The following behaviors are not supportive of healthy outcomes for LGBTQI youth. These behaviors can raise your child's risk of negative outcomes, including higher risk of suicidality, drug use, and poor decision-making.</p>	<p>The following behaviors are supportive of healthy outcomes for LGBTQI youth. These behaviors positively impact your child's emotional, social, and psychological development and well-being.</p>
<p>Bullying, teasing, harassing or name calling your child. For example, using derogatory terminology, or terms that your child considers inaccurate or derogatory, to refer to your child, or to your child's sexual orientation or gender identity.</p>	<p>Use accurate and respectful terminology when discussing your child's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Find out how your child prefers to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, and use this language yourself.</p>
<p>Causing physical harm. For example, hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, biting, or threatening your child with a weapon.</p>	<p>Protect your child's physical well-being. If you have negative emotions, express these in emotions in healthy ways, and do not allow others to threaten or be physically aggressive or hurtful to your child.</p>
<p>Denying your child's basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, etc. For example, kicking your child/youth out of the home.</p>	<p>Continue to provide for your child's physical needs, including shelter, food, clothing, etc. Make sure your child knows they are welcome in your home, and that it is their home.</p>
<p>Closing lines of communication. Refusing to talk to your youth/child, either in general or specifically refusing to talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, giving them the "silent treatment" or telling them, "I don't want to know about that; don't talk to me about that."</p>	<p>Encourage your child to continue to talk to you about their feelings and identity, even if you would rather avoid the topic. Tell your child, "no question/conversation is off limits," and fulfill that promise. If you feel uncomfortable, invite them to educate you, and tell them you will work toward greater comfort and understanding.</p>
<p>Social or emotional exclusion from you/your family. For example, not including your child in activities or events, withholding affectionate gestures, not sharing family news with your child/youth, or avoiding mention of your child.</p> <p>Excluding your child's LGBTQI friends and significant others from family events and activities, if similar heterosexual cisgender friends or significant others would have been included.</p>	<p>Continue to fully include your child in the social and emotional life of your family, including expressions of love, family traditions and activities, conversations, etc. Continue to be involved in your child's life; know their friends, interests, and activities.</p> <p>Invite your child/youth's LGBT friends, significant other(s) to your home, and, when appropriate, to family events.</p>

<p>Creating a home climate in which LGBTQI people are disrespected/ridiculed. Making unkind or disparaging comments about LGBTQI people in general, or about specific LGBTQI people within or outside the family.</p> <p>Telling jokes that stereotype LGBTQI people, or make fun of LGBTQI people.</p> <p>Allowing television shows that use stereotypes of LGBTQI people as a source of humor, or in which LGBTQI characters are derogated.</p>	<p>Give positive messages about people with varied sexual orientations and/or gender identities: use examples from daily life, family, friends, the media, music and your community; comment on news stories that impact the lives or rights of LGBTQI people.</p> <p>Have books in your home that provide accurate, affirming information about LGBTQI people. Use inclusive language in your daily life with your child and throughout your daily interactions.</p> <p>Initiate conversations about sexuality including the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity from an early age. Value and affirm all sexual orientations and gender identities.</p>
<p>Allowing others to use derogatory, disrespectful, threatening, or bullying language in any setting to your child, about your child/youth's sexual orientation or gender identity, or about LGBTQI people in general, including immediate family members, extended family members, family friends, neighbors, coworkers, store clerks, medical providers, etc.; failing to respond to such language, especially in the presence of your child.</p>	<p>Do not allow anyone to use disrespectful language or make derogatory remarks to your child, about your child, or about LGBTQI people in general. This includes immediate family members, extended family members, family friends, neighbors, coworkers, store clerks, medical providers, etc. Speak up when you hear someone say anything that is biased or insulting to LGBTQI individuals. Correct others' stereotypes about LGBTQI people.</p>
<p>Denying access to supportive friends and groups.</p> <p>For example, prohibiting your child from seeing friends who are LGBTQI or who are supportive of your child's sexual orientation or gender identity, or purposefully interfering with your child's efforts to make, and socialize with, such friends.</p> <p>Prohibiting your child from attending support groups, joining affirming school clubs (e.g., GSAs) or having adult LGBTQI mentors, or making it difficult for your child to participate in LGBTQI-affirming social activities. For example, refusing to drive your child to these activities, setting curfews that preclude participation in such social activities, or refusing to sign permission slips to join school clubs.</p>	<p>Facilitate access to supportive friends and groups.</p> <p>Support your child in their efforts to find friends who are supportive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, including friends who are LGBTQI.</p> <p>Support your child in their efforts to find affirming social places, e.g., support groups, affirming school clubs, adult LGBTQI mentors. Facilitate their efforts to join, and attend, these social groups and events.</p> <p>Find an LGBTQI mentor for your child and encourage that connection.</p>
<p>Not taking your child seriously about their gender identity or sexual orientation. This includes characterizing it as "acting out," or as a "fad" or a temporary "phase." For example,</p>	<p>Affirm your child's growing understanding of their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Recognize that your child is discovering who they are as a human being, and that your</p>

<p>telling your child or others that your child will “outgrow it,” “is too young to know who they are,” or that they are “just trying to get attention,” “just copying a fad,” or “are being influenced by the wrong friends.”</p>	<p>child is the ultimate source of knowledge about who they are.</p>
<p>Asking or forcing your child to hide or deny their sexual orientation or gender identity.</p> <p>For example, forcing them to wear clothes that do not fit their gender identity, or asking them to “tone it down,” or to be more “feminine” or more “masculine.”</p> <p>Requesting that your child keep their sexual orientation or gender identity a secret from others, even if under the guise of protecting themselves from the negative reactions of others.</p>	<p>Support your child’s efforts to express their identity in healthy ways. For example, encourage them to wear clothing that feels comfortable to them. Use their preferred pronouns and name.</p> <p>Support your child in their efforts to come out to others. Help them think through when, how, and whether to tell other family members, peers, teachers, etc. When your child/youth is ready to come out to others, practice these conversations with them and brainstorm what could go wrong and how to handle that. Let them know you will support them no matter what.</p>
<p>Using religion as a threat to suppress your child/youth’s expression of their gender identity or sexual orientation, or to pressure your child to “change” their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For example, telling your child that God hates them, that they are sinning, that they are disgraced, or cannot participate in religious activities or attendance because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.</p>	<p>Promote the positive influence of religion on your child’s life. If you or your family’s religious traditions include traditional teachings about gender or prescribe heterosexuality only, shield your child from others’ use of religion to derogate or shame your child. Parents belonging to many different religions have found ways to support their LGBTQI children while also retaining their faith and religious beliefs. You might be able to find religious leaders or congregants who can help you find a way to accept and support your LGBTQI child within the context of your faith.</p>
<p>Blaming, rather than protecting, your child from others’ negative reactions.</p> <p>Ignoring bullying in your child/youth’s life; for example, not taking it seriously if your child says they are being bullied or harassed by peers, family members, family friends, or health care providers; ignoring signs that your child is being bullied.</p> <p>Blaming your child/youth for being bullied because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, comments like, “what did you expect?” or “if you weren’t so obvious, they wouldn’t bother you so much.”</p> <p>Blaming other problems in the family on your</p>	<p>Advocate for your child, for example, in school, with extended family members, and with religious community members and the community at large.</p> <p>If your child is being bullied/harassed/disrespected by others, then work to change the attitudes of those others, or to change the school, religious, family, or community culture that disrespects LGBTQI people, rather than asking your child to be the one to change.</p> <p>Ask your child if they feel respected and safe at school; let them know that they have the right to feel safe at school, and that if they don’t, that you will support them. Advocate for affirming and inclusive policies and practices at your child’s</p>

<p>child's sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, identifying your LGBTQI child as a source of discord in the family if family members have conflicting responses to the LGBTQI child, or blaming the child for the maladaptive behaviors of others in the family, e.g., for a parent's drinking, frustration, or anger.</p>	<p>school.</p> <p>Educate yourself and others about sexual orientation and gender identity. Gather resources in the community for yourself, your youth and any family members and share the resources!</p>
<p>Ignoring signs of mental health concerns in your child, e.g., depression, anxiety, self-harm, changes in personality or behavior; failing to provide or seek appropriate support for your child's mental well-being, including appropriate support if needed during your child's questioning/coming out process.</p> <p>Blaming any other problems your child might have, on their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, saying that any unhealthy behaviors of your child (e.g., smoking, defiance) are caused by the child's sexual orientation or gender identity or would resolve if the child would "stop" being LGBTQI.</p>	<p>Seek appropriate support, if needed, for your child's mental well-being, including support during their questioning/coming out process. Offer your child the opportunity to talk with a knowledgeable and affirming professional counselor or other trusted adult about any issues they are not yet ready/comfortable addressing with you. Be alert to any signs that your child is experiencing any mental health concerns.</p> <p>Remember that any other problems your child might have are not necessarily related to their sexual orientation or gender identity; or, these problems might be a result of others' negative reactions to their sexual orientation or gender identity.</p>
<p>Undermining the value of your child as a person. Characterizing your child's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression as a moral failure, weakness, or lesser way of being e.g., if they were strong enough they would be able to be heterosexual or cisgender, stating that you wished they were heterosexual/cisgender, giving less value to their accomplishments or needs, choosing not to support or encourage them in their endeavors, or treating them as a less valuable person because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.</p>	<p>Valuing your child as a whole person, including their LGBTQI identity. Affirm your child/youth's worth and value when they come out to you or you come to understand their sexual orientation and/or gender identity; tell them you love them as they are, and for who they are.</p> <p>Remember that your child is a whole person; their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression are only a few of the many different characteristics that make up your child, and that your child is still the same person they were before you found out they are or might be LGBTQI.</p>
<p>Moral Reprobation. Expressing shame, disappointment or fear regarding your child's sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, telling your child that they are bringing shame on themselves, or on the family, that others will think less of them or of your family, or that they are a threat to your family's social standing.</p>	<p>Be your child's best supporter, their biggest fan! Express awe and pride in your child's specific skills and strengths, and for your child as a person. Tell them you are proud of their courage.</p>