

## Parents of Gays Come Out

"Mom, Dad, I have to talk to you--about something important." You begin your well-rehearsed speech, something you've been planning for perhaps a very long time. The actual presentation, with your parents before you, feels quite different than how it went in front of the mirror. The words come more slowly, or in a flurry, and may not be at all the ones you had chosen for this final, ultimate, terrifying delivery. It doesn't feel at all like it did when you told your close trusted friends. These are your parents, for God's sake, the people who have loved you and cared for you all your life, the ones who have sacrificed for you, disciplined you, wanted you, and to some degree lived through you. Your desire to please them and to become the person they've dreamed of you becoming is second only to your wish to live your life according to your most intimate feelings.

You finally get it out--"I'm gay"---and tensely wait for their reaction.

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Many gays never experience this confrontation. In recent years, however, more and more of us have opted to tell our parents about our sexual orientation and lifestyles. For some, this action has had negative and perhaps permanent effects:

You're not our child. We didn't bring you up to be faggot! I'll not have a queer in my house. Get out!

Are you sure? You can change. We'll send you to the best doctors. They'll cure you.

We want you to live a happy life, and experience the joy of having children of your own. Just try dating some boys. Don't break our hearts.

For others, the result has been a (gradual) partial or full acceptance by parents. It was from this striving for an understanding of their children's homosexuality that Parents of Gays was formed

These concerned parents formed a support group to understand just what homosexuality is, to enlighten themselves and others on just how all aspects of society can affect them and their children and to guide each other in dealing with this knowledge, which may have suddenly turned their worlds upside down.

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Two such concerned parents from Raleigh Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Parents FLAG) recently spoke at a CGA meeting. The couple discussed how they felt when their son came out to them.

"We were devastated, because of our fear for his lifetime unhappiness and loneliness. We knew nothing about homosexuality, and it was frightening," they said. It was quite clear to those present that the devastation and eventual acceptance these parents spoke of was due to their love and concern for their son's well-being.

Throughout their introductory talk and the question-and-answer period, this mother and father were open and candid, giving answers when they had them and admitting when they had none. The fact of their willingness to come and share was evidence of their sincerity and warmth.

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To help those of us who have not come out to our families and who may be thinking of doing so, our guests distributed some literature about the group's goals and beliefs and about how to tell your parents.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays recognizes and believes that gays are demographically indistinguishable from the general population--they come from and are part of every region of the world, all religions and ethnic groups, and all social and economic levels. They believe that gay people are healthy, naturally homosexual, moral and are part of the family. These parents love their children.

-Ron

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