



## Adolescence and homosexuality

### WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

At different points in their lives, people may question their sexual orientation. This is normal, but it can be disconcerting, particularly during adolescence, a time when people learn about themselves and discover who they are.

Both boys and girls can find it scary to wonder about their sexual orientation and attraction to people of the same sex. They may be afraid of feeling different from most people their own age, being rejected, being bullied, and experiencing homophobia.

It's also not easy for young people to open up to their parents or people around them about their sexuality. They often face this issue alone.

**Sexual orientation  
is not a choice.**

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Sexual orientation means being emotionally and physically attracted to a person of the same sex (homosexuality), the opposite sex (heterosexuality) or both sexes (bisexuality).
- It can be difficult for parents to help if they don't know how to react to their child's questioning of his or her sexual orientation or to the announcement that their child is gay or lesbian.
- Parents don't have control over the sexual orientation of their sons or daughters. It's impossible to predict or influence what their orientation will be. Parents aren't responsible for their children's sexual orientation.

#### Things that kids might be wondering

- Is it normal to be attracted to a person of the same sex?
- Why do I feel different from other people?
- Will my friends judge me if I tell them I'm gay?
- I kissed my best friend and it felt good: am I bisexual?
- How do I tell my parents I'm gay?

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

### If you think your child is questioning his or her sexual orientation

**Give them time.** Be patient. Your son or daughter may spend many years wondering about his or her sexual orientation before wanting to talk about it.

**Be open.** Use multiple opportunities (TV shows, videos, etc.) to make positive comments about homosexuality (e.g., it's interesting to see more and more same-sex couples on TV; a co-worker showed me pictures of her vacation with her girlfriend, and they seemed really happy together, etc.). Then when kids are finally ready to talk about it, they'll be more receptive.

**It takes a lot of courage for young people to talk about their homosexuality.  
No matter how you react, don't forget that she's your child and that she needs you.**

### My son told me that he's gay or bisexual

It's normal to be surprised. But your son was probably thinking about coming out to you for long time, and he might want you to understand right away. You can say that the situation is new and that you need time to adapt.

Avoid judging. Your child may fear disappointing you by coming out that he's gay or bisexual. He wants you to accept him for who he is and to support him during this process.

Remind your child that you love him and that you will always be there for him. Your son is no different from the child you have always known just because he isn't heterosexual. He will always be the child who excels at sports, who adores art or who loves movies. He's the same person you know and love!

#### Tips

##### Question your attitudes about homosexuality.

It's important to reflect on your own attitudes towards homosexuality no matter what your child's sexual orientation. How do you react when you see two people of the same sex kissing? Your son or daughter's friend is homosexual; how do you react? Your son is being called a "fag" at school; what do you do?

**Your verbal or nonverbal reactions to homosexuality have an influence on your child.** Keep in mind that young people who are questioning their sexual orientation may want to test their parents. For example, they may say something like "Did you see that fag on TV?" to see how people react.

## WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

### Book

GIASSON, Sylvie. *Vivre avec l'homosexualité de son enfant*, Bayard, 2007.

### Gai Écoute

Free and confidential listening and support service, open 7 days a week. (Web site in French only; bilingual help line.)  
1-888-505-1010  
[www.gaiecoutte.org](http://www.gaiecoutte.org)

### Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

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