



1 in 5 kids who've spent time in foster care are LGBTQ: Valuable resources for parents

Coming out as LGBTQ can be daunting for anyone. Many people risk losing family, friends, and sometimes their jobs or community.

Imagine with me for a moment that you are coming out as LGBTQ. This is you:

You have friends, family, and a job you love. You're involved in the community and have a positive outlook on life. If you come out, perhaps your friend Amy will begin to shun you. It'll be hurtful for sure, but you have Sue, Fred, and other friends to hang out with. Uncle Arnie might make the holidays tense and uncomfortable, but it's okay. You have a large family and plenty of support.

You decide it's worth the risk. You may *lose* some connections in your life, but you'll make new ones.

This isn't always the case for LGBT young people who are in foster care or adopted.

According to a recent study more than 1 in 5 kids in the foster care system is LGBTQ. Their foster/adoptive families may or may not be accepting of their sexual identity. This can be particularly challenging for young people who are already grappling with the impacts of early childhood trauma.

Imagine with me for a moment that you are an LGBTQ adopted or foster child. This is you:

You're already struggling on some level with attachment due to your background and experiences. You feel awkward, uncomfortable, and disconnected. This is only exacerbated by the fact that you're acclimating to a new family. You're afraid of saying something wrong and always feel a bit like an outsider. You've left all your old friends behind and are in a new school. You aren't even thinking about your future – you're worried about just tomorrow. Do you dare risk your tenuous connection with your adoptive mom? You rely on her for food, clothes, rides, and money. What if she kicks you out and you have no where to go? If this is the only connection you have, is it worth the risk?

Coming out as LGBTQ may literally mean risking everything and everyone. The stakes can be sky high for our LGBT adopted and foster kids, but there is hope – you. Research has shown that with one accepting adult in their lives, LGBT youth are 40% less likely to attempt suicide. That one person can be you.

Regardless of religious or moral convictions, we all can agree that we want our children to be healthy and happy. We want them to thrive. To do this, we must keep their attachment issues in mind and, above all, focus on how to help them feel safe, loved, and cared for.

Here are some useful resources as you navigate a way forward with the best interest of your child in mind:

- **The Trevor Project** – A national 24-hour, toll free confidential hotline for LGBTQ youth.
- **Supportive Families, Healthy Children** – Practical advice on a respectful way forward even for parents who may have moral or religious reservations. (Download the flyer under Family Education Information on the Family Acceptance Project website.)
- **Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate** by Justin Lee – An insightful book written by an evangelical Christian for other Christians.
- **Boy Erased** – A book and movie, this is the story of a young gay man who went through conversion therapy.
- **Parents Support Group of LGBTQ* Teens, Children, and Adults** – A private Facebook group for support and advice.

Remember – you may be the only connection, the only “safe person,” your adopted or foster child has. If they dare share with you about their sexual identity, they are bestowing an enormous amount of trust on you. Let's help our kids reach for the stars.