
A silhouette of a person with their hands raised in the air, set against a solid orange background. The person's head is in the center, and their arms are extended upwards, with hands open. The overall tone is warm and supportive.

**“Dad, I’ve got  
something  
to tell you”**

**some answers to the questions  
you might have if your son is gay.**

**( \* ? ! ! )**



**Learning that your son is attracted to men can be unsettling. You might be completely fine, but many fathers find this news difficult. This leaflet gives answers to some of the questions you might have when you find out "my son is gay".**

Other fathers say they have a range of reactions. For example:

- **Shock.** Your world suddenly seems to have been turned upside down.
- **Loss.** Some fathers expect their sons to get married and have children. This news changes what you were expecting from him.
- **Guilt.** You might be wondering if something you did or didn't do caused him to be gay.
- **Disbelief** that this could be happening.
- **Anxiety.** What does it mean for your son's future? Has he already been in relationships? Does he know how to keep himself safe? Has he experienced prejudice or harassment? Will it adversely affect his career?
- **Anger** that he has 'chosen' this way of life.
- **Distaste** about the physical side of your son's relationships.
- **Fear** in case family or friends reject your son or even you.
- **Hope** that he might be going through a phase that he will grow out of.
- **Amazement** that you did not realise your son was gay until now.
- **Sadness** that he seemed to find it so hard to tell you.
- **The urge** to protect him from other people's bad reactions or sexual health risks.

**There are as many different ways of reacting, as there are people!**



## What does it mean for me?

When you get over the initial shock, having a gay son sometimes changes your view of the world. You may not even have realised that you knew gay people. You do. We all do.

You can try to understand and support your son but your feelings also need to be respected too. You need time to get used to the idea. Even parents that thought they were fine about gay issues can find that it takes longer to fully feel at ease when it is their own child. Children can feel hugely relieved when they have told their parents, but parents then have to take on the issues of 'coming out' themselves.

Where you live can affect how you deal with this. It is often easier for people in a city and more difficult if you live in a rural community where you may feel more isolated and vulnerable.

Your son has shared something very important with you, and has probably found it a very difficult thing to do. It is likely that he has been aware since he was very young of 'being different'.

Most people come out in their teens, but some may come out later, even in adulthood after leading what seemed to be a heterosexual life. After he tells you, he might be aggressive or defensive as he has to come to terms with his identity and even the most accepting parents can have problems coping.

While things may change between you, now that he can be honest about who he is, you may find that you develop an even closer relationship with him.



## Did I do something to make my son gay?

No. You cannot 'make' anybody gay. Being gay is not an illness and it doesn't need a cure. Trying to cure or change someone is likely to be very harmful to them. He did not choose to be gay, or decide to be gay to cause you distress.

We don't really know what causes people to be gay, any more than we know what causes people to be straight, but it's natural for parents to want to understand what affects their children.

Research shows that there is probably a mix of genes and other social factors, which led to a person being gay. Absent fathers or domineering mothers are just two of the myths which surround this issue. They are just myths. Nothing you or his mother did made him gay.

Children can be brought up together and although they all had the same upbringing one of them turns out to be gay. In some families there can be more than one gay sibling.

Your son is part of a minority group which is found in every society, every kind of family and education background. About 1 in 10 men will grow up to be gay or bisexual.

Many boys try very hard to hide and cover up their identity. They may feel fear of physical or verbal abuse at school. Being openly gay can be a difficult way of life because of the lack of understanding in society – it is a path few people would choose. But it is not a choice.

## What does my son need from me?

Your son is still your son. He hasn't suddenly changed because he has told you that he is gay, but your view of him might have changed. Remember that being gay is only one aspect of his personality. He still needs your love and support and this will be easier if you can try to understand the issues involved.

Respect his decisions about 'coming out'. Try not to say hurtful things that you might regret later. Don't assume it's a phase; it may be, but only he will know and time will tell.

Some gay children are rejected by their fathers. Even if you have a close relationship, your son took a risk in telling you about himself. It can't have been easy. He needs to know that you are still there for him, even if you don't quite know what the future will bring.

## What does the rest of my family need from me?

It helps to treat the situation calmly. Your family may need to talk to you about how you feel or about how they feel. People will react in different ways, will have different needs to help them deal with the news and it can put a strain on a marriage or partnership.

If your son has brothers and sisters, they may well have known that their brother was gay for some time. This is a time for the family to try extra hard to support each other.



## **I can't handle the thought of my son having sexual relations with men.**

This is a very common response and can be difficult to deal with. However, sexual relations are private and we don't usually know much about the sex lives of our children who are not gay. Sometimes parents ask their gay sons questions about their sexual practice because they are concerned about their sexual health.

It is important to make sure that your son knows about safer sex and how to look after his sexual health. There are organisations that can give him good information and advice (see details at the back). However try to avoid asking intimate questions that you would not ask him if he was straight.

## **How can I tell people outside the family?**

You should not share this information with others unless your son is happy about who you are telling as he might not be ready to face other people. Talk with your son about his.

You might feel the need to talk with someone else, such as a close friend, but you shouldn't really tell people without his permission.

Even if your son is happy for you to be open with other people, take care who you talk to. You may find it difficult to handle a very negative response. Make sure that you feel able to deal with different reactions. It is hard to tell how people will react but sometimes support comes from the most unexpected sources.



## Am I the only man in this situation ?

It may feel like this at first. However, this leaflet was written by men who were in the same position as you. The shock does go, the love for your son can remain and be strengthened as you grow to accept this new reality and learn to view the world from each others perspective.

There will be more families like yours than you think and, when your child comes out, you may find that other close friends or even relatives are in the same situation, either gay themselves or with gay children.

## Who else can I talk to ?

Sometimes parents want to talk to people outside the family. Even parents who have always prided themselves on being accepting of others may be shocked by their own reaction when it is their son. They find that they don't know what to expect or what to do next, and feel the need to find out more.

Your son may be happy to answer questions, but some parents want to talk more freely to someone who is less immediately involved. Parents Enquiry Scotland has helplines operated by parents who are willing to listen and perhaps share their experiences. We have all found it extremely helpful to talk over our problems with other parents who understand.



## **I have religious problems with this.**

Even if your faith does not support relationships between men, all faiths advocate treating people with dignity and respect. He needs your love even more than before, and parents can support their children without necessarily changing their own beliefs. It is the quality of any relationship that really matters and a gay relationship can be as loving and responsible as a straight one.

It has taken tremendous courage for him to tell you and, if you reject him, you could lose your son and leave him at greater risk.

## **What about his friends?**

It may have confused you that he has appeared to have girl friends in the past, but this might just have been a very close friendship. He may have gay male friends who will be very important to him and he may have a partner. Just as in straight children's relationships there will be some friends/partners you like and some you don't. Gay partners can become part of the family just as any other 'in-law' and civil registration through the Civil Partnership Act (2004) gives gay couples many of the same legal rights as married couples.

You may be worried about the possibility of his being lonely in old age but gay people often have a very strong network of friends, even if they don't have a partner.

If you maintain a good relationship with your son, he is less likely to turn to other people who may not have his interests at heart as much as you do.



## Why was I the last to know ?

Sons often find it hardest to tell their fathers because they know how much it could disappoint them. They may have tried for years to keep up the conventional father/son image.

Young gay people have told us that they feared the loss of their parents when they came out. They expect that their mothers will be more accepting but that telling their father will be the most difficult thing they have to face.

He could possibly have been finally motivated to tell you by a major event in his life, good or bad, such as his excitement at meeting a really significant partner. It is perhaps just because parents are so loved and valued that they are the last to know.



## Where can I get help?

Parents Enquiry Scotland who operate helplines, provide information packs, a booklist and an annual newsletter. If you would like to speak to a parent, please phone Central Helpline at 0131 556 6047 between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Talk2 is a new project established in Glasgow City to help support parents in talking to children and young people about all aspects of growing up, relationships and sexual health. There is an information line on Mondays 10 – 1.30pm and Thursdays 1.30 – 4.30pm on 0141 287 2841 and a comprehensive website at [www.talk2glasgow.com](http://www.talk2glasgow.com)

Minority language leaflets in Urdu and a tape in Hindi are produced by FFLAG and are available from Parents Enquiry Scotland.

[www.parentsenquiryscotland.org](http://www.parentsenquiryscotland.org)

email: [parentsenquiry@hotmail.com](mailto:parentsenquiry@hotmail.com)

## Other Useful Services

### Parentline Scotland

This is a free, confidential telephone helpline for parents. You can call about any problem however big or small. Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9am – 5.00pm and Tuesday and Thursday 9am – 9pm on 0808 800 222.

Website: [www.children1st.org.uk/parentline](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline)

### Parents Network Scotland

Run by parents and offers information and resources to provide parents with new skills and support so that they can get on better with their children.

Phone 0131 555 6780

Website: [www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk](http://www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk)

Breathing Space 0800 838587 6pm – 2am

(free confidential helpline to talk over anything you want to).

Strathclyde Lesbian and Gay Switchboard 0141 887 0447

7 – 10pm (trained counsellors who are lesbian or gay).

LGBT Youth Scotland Youthline for young people 0845 113 0005

7.30 – 9pm (support service for young people who are lesbian, gay and bisexual).

