



What To Do When Your Child Discloses His or Her Homosexuality – Andrew Comiskey

1. Listen. Painful as this moment is, (s)he is disclosing something deeply personal and painful. Keep in mind that (s)he has probably wrestled with these desires for years and is just summoning the courage to tell you about them. That is a gift. It means (s)he perceives you as trustworthy. Resist the temptation to make this about you—your future, your expectations, your shame. This is about a loved one who will need all the love you can give.
2. Affirm your love for him/her. Express gratitude that (s)he would entrust such a weighty disclosure to you, and a risky one, in light of deeply held family beliefs. Expressing your love does not negate these beliefs. It simply means that you are standing in the truth that this one has not ceased to be your beloved son or daughter because of same-sex attraction (SSA).
3. See a beloved son or daughter, not a homosexual. Naming oneself 'gay' or 'lesbian' is a decision people make to identify with their attractions or with a newfound relationship. Your family member may want to identify this way but you need not agree with him or her. Loving someone does not mean agreeing with every decision (s)he makes. Having said that, you need not make this distinction between a tendency/relationship and an identity a big issue. It is simply important for you to know that (s)he is not intrinsically 'gay' even if (s)he wants to be.
4. Ask helpful questions (not unhelpful ones like 'Why are you gay?' or 'What have we done?!') such as: Have you had these feelings a long time? Have you had a same-gender relationship? Who else knows and supports you in this? Are you at peace with your homosexuality or is it a conflict for you? Where is God for you in this struggle? Most importantly, what do you need from us at this point? (Probably a break from so many questions!)
5. Taking a break might be helpful. Having listened, it can be good to gather your faculties before you say something regrettable. You will find your relationship will require a lot of space and time for both parties. It is a challenge to negotiate what may become some differences in how you understand the nature of homosexuality itself.
6. Learn. Different factors influence SSA, including what the culture deems the right way to resolve these feelings. Let him/her know that a variety of options exist for working out one's SSA; it depends significantly on who one chooses to be supported by. However,



the chances are likely that this young adult may not want parents to guide his/her sexual process. For obvious reasons: she is seeking to individuate from you and possibly also from your faith tradition. Keep your head. Part of growing up into one's own moral decision-making involves exploration. In the meantime, check out Restored Hope Network, Courage and NARTH for further resources. Ask your child if you can give them input on the opportunities that do exist for aligning one's sexuality with Scripture and Church teaching. They may balk and you may need to back off but remind them that in spite of all their silent prayers, they have probably not enlisted the help of a caring, truthful community. These communities do exist, and your child needs to know that. They simply may not be ready to enlist such help.

7. Cool off. It probably took you a lot of time to deal with the destructive habits you faced as a young adult. Your parents did not make your decision to go to AA or to give up porn or to go to therapy. You will drive your child away if your goal for his/her life pervades every conversation. Remember, (s)he is an adult. You treat a 14-year-old very differently from a 24-year-old.
8. Pray for his or her chastity and fruitfulness. Every parent wants his/her child to become fruitful. You have authority to hold fast to such fruitfulness and the chastity that undergirds it. Pray more for such fruitfulness and talk less to them about it. Learn how to release your young adult to God, even if (s)he is making bad choices. All you can do is choose to not pay for those choices. Set boundaries in love if you have become 'codependent' with a child's sexual immorality. It is OK to not want sexual immorality of any type in your household. Just make sure you are consistent with all types of sexual sin, including your favorites.
9. Grieve unto Life. Your child is caught in the crossfire of a spiritual and moral battle. Wail, mourn, repent unto the Lord's kindness (James 4:7-10). As you consider whatever role you played in your child's confusion, confess your faults to the Lord and His friends; drink in the mercy you need. God is converting you in this process. More than ever, you need to know that One is in charge of your life and your child's, and that He alone is able to make this desert a garden for those called according to His purpose (Rom. 8: 28). You can choose to look to God in a way that you have never looked before. See how God is using this moral crisis to bring you to your knees? You are right where He wants you, entrusting the child you love most to the One who loves him/her best.