



# Coming Out, Coming Home: Helping Families Adjust to a Gay or Lesbian Child

*Michael C. LaSala*

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The discovery that a child is lesbian or gay can send shockwaves through a family. A mother will question how she's raised her son; a father will worry that his daughter will experience discrimination. From the child's perspective, gay and lesbian youth fear their families will reject them and that they will lose financial and emotional support. All in all, learning a child is gay challenges long-held views about sexuality and relationships, and the resulting uncertainty can produce feelings of anger, resentment, and concern.

Through a qualitative, multicultural study of sixty-five gay and lesbian children and their parents, Michael LaSala, a leading expert on this issue, outlines effective, practice-tested interventions for families in transition. His research reveals surprising outcomes, such as learning that a child is homosexual can improve familial relationships, including father-child relationships, even if a parent reacts strongly or negatively to the revelation. By confronting feelings of depression, anxiety, and grief head on, LaSala formulates the best approach for practitioners who hope to reestablish intimacy among family members and preserve family connections—as well as individual autonomy—well into the child's maturation. By restricting his study to parents and children of the same family, LaSala accurately captures the reciprocal effects of family interactions, identifying them as targets for effective treatment. *Coming Out, Coming Home* is also a valuable text for families, enabling adjustment through relatable scenarios and analyses.



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