

When my daughter told me she is

gay...



◆ Linda Ma

When my daughter told me she is gay, I was devastated. Because I love my daughter so much, I decided to try to understand what being gay is all about.

I have always thought that being gay is wrong; however, as I learn more about people who are gay, I realized that most of the things that I thought I knew are wrong. For example, the vast majority of scientists believe that being gay is not a choice and is not a disease. In fact, American Psychology Association has decided three decades ago to no longer consider being gay as a psychological disorder. Even to this day, no one has been able to demonstrate that sexual orientation can be changed. There is also no evidence to suggest that being gay is the result of molestation or bad family environment. Many mainstream organizations such as the American Medical Association, American Family Physicians Association, American Psychiatric Association, and American Pediatricians Association all support the same-sex couple's freedom to marry. American Pediatrician Association also supports adoption by same-sex parents.

Studies also show that the real cause of gay people's hardship is not being gay but rather anti-gay prejudice. People who are gay or who are perceived to be gay often become targets of verbal and physical assault. And these types of attacks cause a high level of depression, anxiety, anger, post-traumatic stress, and other symptoms. Anti-gay prejudice also increases the instances of suicides. Gay youths who are contemplating suicides are often deeply affected by anti-gay prejudice and experience a much greater level of ostracism from their families.

Because I understand now what it means to be gay, I decided to accept my daughter. I have found information online, read some books, and had long talks with my daughter. I now understand much more than I did before, and I accept my daughter's real identity.

In Chinese culture, the pressure to form a family and have children drives many people who are gay to get married and have kids. These pseudo-families lack mutual trust and open dialogue; this hurts everyone in the family. I have met many young students from China who are waiting for their parents to pass away to begin living authentic lives. The more I hear about these stories, the sadder I get.

The family unit has always been the foundation of Chinese culture. A family's life is often filled with moments of joy and disappointment, but it is love that will keep the family together for the long haul. If a member of your family comes out to you, you may feel incredibly shocked in the beginning. But just remember, this person is telling you that "I am telling you about the real me because I love you". And this feeling of love should be cherished.

**Keeping Families Together
is Our Number One Priority**



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