

# PFLAG

**BUFFALO/NIAGARA**



**There is no Sharing Meeting in December.**

**We are here for you via the Helpline if needed.**

**716-883-0384**

**For Zoom meetings, call our Helpline to leave contact information. You will be given the codes for the meeting. If you have attended virtually, you may use the same codes. In-person meetings take place in the library of the Kenilworth United Church of Christ, a welcoming and affirming faith community at 45 Dalton Street in Tonawanda 14150.**

We meet because we have learned someone close to us has come out as LGBTQ+. We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner. Although we do not always agree, we try to be understanding. We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others. We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable.

**FROM PFLAG NATIONAL**

**HELPFUL IDEAS FOR NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS**

**FOR LGBTQ+ PERSONS AND FAMILIES**



About 4.5% of Americans identify as LGBTQ+ — meaning more than 11 million people in the country ---and being accepted and affirmed (or not) plays a big role in their well-being. This all really comes into play at holiday time, or any time an LGBTQ+ person might be headed home.

While for some LGBTQ+ people, holidays mean celebration, joy, family, and togetherness, for others, holidays can mean a time of stress, difficulty, and even sadness or depression...especially if one feels that they aren't able to come out or are not out to everyone in the family. No matter what, PFLAG National is here to help provide support and information for the holidays, or any time of year that folks are headed home.

Sitting through a family meal, or visiting through an entire weekend or week, can be challenging enough, but what happens if you are not yet out or in a position to be out as you make your way through the meal or the week?

Below are some suggestions--both for people who are LGBTQ+ and for families and allies--for getting through family gatherings. And remember: if you need immediate support, you can [find a PFLAG chapter here](#), reach out to us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [TikTok](#), or [call a helpline for crisis support](#).



### **If you are LGBTQ+...**

- Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity—you may be surprised.

Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday or visit. Recognize that your parents and family may need time to acknowledge and accept that they have an LGBTQ+ family member. It took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn. But...

- Don't cause yourself undue emotional, psychological, or physical harm while you wait for your family to catch up. Put them in contact with PFLAG and, if need be, spend time with your chosen family while other family works to catch up.
- If you are transgender, be gentle but firm with unintentional pronoun or other "slips." Let your loved ones know that you understand how difficult this journey may be for them—but don't hesitate to remind them when it happens how hard it is for you to hear.

### ***Before the visit...***

- Make a decision about which family members you intend to be "out" to, and how you will do so.
- If you bring your partner home, don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.

- If you do plan to come out to your family over the holidays, have support available, including [PFLAG publications](#) and [the phone number of a local PFLAG chapter](#).

### ***During the visit...***

- Reassure family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
- Remember to affirm yourself and take time for self-care: read a book, listen to music, get out of the house and take a walk or see friends, whatever de-stresses you.
- Connect with someone else who is LGBTQ–by phone or in person–who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.

### ***After the visit...***

- If things went well with your family, be sure to follow up with them post-holiday to check in, see if they have any questions, and thank them for their love and support.
- If things did not go as well as you had anticipated, be sure to contact your local support system, whether that be close friends, or members from your local PFLAG chapter. Reconnect quickly with those who love and affirm you as you are and give yourself an opportunity to discuss and process the family event.

### **If you are the family member of someone who is LGBTQ+...**

- Get support for yourself. [Find the nearest PFLAG chapter](#).
- Take your time. Acceptance may not come instantly, but be honest about your feelings in an appropriate place. This is why PFLAG is so crucial – you can demonstrate support and love of your newly out LGBTQ+ loved one, and then work through any challenging emotions in a separate space with peers.



### ***Before the visit...***

- Check out this learning session from PFLAG Academy Online, available on demand, any time: [When Someone Comes Out: A PFLAGers Guide to Demonstrating Support and Acceptance.](#)
- Practice in advance if you are going to be discussing your loved ones sexual orientation or gender identity with family and friends. If you are comfortable talking about it, your family and friends will probably be more comfortable too.
- Before your family member arrives home, read one of [PFLAG National's helpful publications](#), available to download for free, any time.
- If your loved one is transgender, nonbinary, or gender expansive, practice using correct pronouns and new names!

### ***During the visit...***

- Treat an LGBTQ+ person as you would treat anyone else in your family.
- Don't ask your LGBTQ+ family member to act a certain way. Let them be themselves.

- If your LGBTQ+ family member is bringing a partner, include them in your family traditions.
- If you are uncertain about how to address an LGBTQ+ family member, respectfully ask in private.
- Everyone makes mistakes! Acknowledge the error, apologize (and really own the mistake), and then make a concerted effort to do better.

### ***After the visit...***

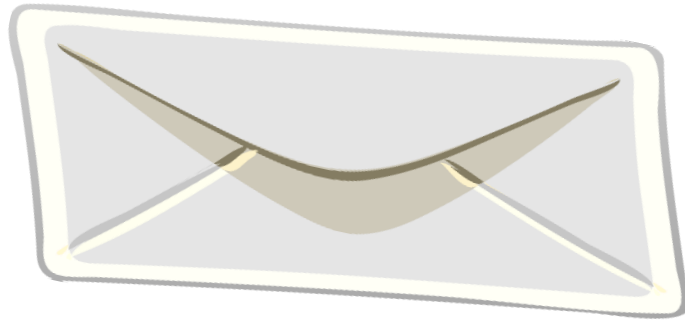
- If things went well with your LGBTQ+ loved one, be sure to check in with them post-holiday, see if they have any questions, and tell them how glad you were that they could be with you, authentically.
- If things did not go as well as you had anticipated, be sure to contact your local PFLAG chapter, and give yourself a moment to connect with those who will understand the challenges and support you as you work toward reconnecting with your LGBTQ+ loved ones.
- Do not let too much time go by before contacting your LGBTQ+ loved one to let them know that you are committed to trying again. Connection is key!

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# PFLAG

## BUFFALO/NIAGARA

***This fall, PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara was asked by a local district school board member to send letters of concern about library issues in the district and the need for LGBTQ+ characters, persons, and topics to be included in the library collection. We would like to share one letter sent by a longtime local PFLAG parent.***



As a former public school English teacher I am appalled at efforts to selectively remove books from our school libraries. Students need to see a wide range of literature from many different groups. To remove books one does not approve of is to oppress and cause harm to others who need to see themselves represented. Of course parents are the final arbiter of what their children read, but a few parents cannot and should not make decisions for all others in a district.

After my career in the Buffalo Public Schools, I was a professor at Buffalo State College charged with teaching courses to prepare future English teachers. One of the most eye-opening experiences for me was when student teachers returned to campus for a meeting to relate their experiences in a variety of school districts. They spoke of their concern because some of their students were in the LGBTQ community and were suffering greatly in schools where other teachers, students, and even their parents did not understand or help them. A book like *This*

*Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson would have helped both the students and the wider community immeasurably. This lack of understanding is why there are so many suicides in the LGBTQ community. As the mother of a trans student told me, "I'd rather have a live trans child than a dead one." I presume no one would want to be the avenue for such life altering despair.

As the mother of a gay son, I have an even greater reason to want to see representation of LGBTQ people in school curricula and school libraries. My son and his husband have children. To remove such material impairs my grandchildren's experience of their family. In addition, my son told his father and me how he suffered in high school because he did not see himself in his

school. How I would have given anything to protect my son from such suffering. I presume these parents who are objecting are receiving very misguided information on LGBTQ literature. I imagine they want the best for all students as well as their own. Being gay is not a choice no matter what anyone claims. Even if you burn every book related to gay themes, young people will still be gay, even one's own children.

I urge your district to take a stand for inclusion. Today young people are very sophisticated. They receive lots of information about sex on their media devices. Much of the internet information is wrong and harmful. It is important to have a healthy antidote. *This Book Is Gay* is one such book. Of course it is appropriate only for high school students. Certainly if parents find this book too objectionable for their child, they will have the right to exclude it.

I urge you to not make decisions for everyone based on a few objections.

Sincerely,

***Linda Drajem***

Linda Drajem, Ph.D

You may recall that Linda Drajem and her son Christopher gave a Zoom presentation for PFLAG B/N earlier this year. The focus was their book, *Wandering Close to Home: A Gay Son and His Feminist Mother's Journey to Transform Themselves and Their Family,* but the need for representation in books and libraries was also part of their presentation and the discussion that ensued.



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BUFFALO/NIAGARA

## **LOOKING BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS WITH AN LGBTQ+ THEME?**



Last year, we published a compilation of holiday book gift ideas for the multiple religious holidays in December. Rather than reprint the full article and list, we are sharing the link to the issue. If the link does not work, please visit [www.pflagbuffalo.org](http://www.pflagbuffalo.org), click the Newsletters tab, and please open the last newsletter in 2023.

[https://www.pflagbuffalo.org/files/ugd/308b9f\\_00aff54335bf428ea5b238c3ef6cdc36.pdf](https://www.pflagbuffalo.org/files/ugd/308b9f_00aff54335bf428ea5b238c3ef6cdc36.pdf)

*Holiday Wishes from the PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Board of Directors*



*We send our wishes to our PFLAG family. If you will be gathering, if you will be celebrating, if you will be sharing time with loved ones this month, we wish you and yours well. We thank you for leading with love in your families. Peace and good will to all.*

**Julie Christiano, President   Lisbeth Ball, Secretary**

**David Barrett, Treasurer**

**Sharon Barrett, Director   Jeanne Mullen, Director**

**PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.**