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**What guidance would you give your child if he or she  
told you he/she was gay?**

*Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer*

Why is this matter of identify formation different than any other identify formation? Would we give different guidance if our child announced that he or she was straight?

For that matter, is the issue one of giving advice or listening openly and being there to support our children's choices? Or implicit in the original question is there a message, namely, that being gay or lesbian requires special handling including the possibility of trying to guide our child away from that choice?

Each new generation, thankfully, finds greater acceptance of a full range of gender and sexual identity preferences, but we are far from parity. Coming out as gay or lesbian to others, not to mention oneself, is fraught with opposing feelings: excitement on finding oneself and anxiety of being rejected, not just by a potential partner, but by family and society.

It seems to me that the best thing parents can do is model acceptance and an openness to talk more. It also seems to me a great thing that the child feels comfortable to bring up the subject or any subject in the first place.

As for giving advice, the litmus test ought to be that it is gender-choice neutral. So we might offer our thoughts on how to navigate feelings of attraction. Or how to deal with the challenges of relationships so that nobody gets mistreated. Or, if necessary, how to get out of relationships that are hurtful and harmful. They're part of life too.

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