

Navigating the holidays

As an LGBTQIA+ person-

Before the visit:

- Make a decision about which family members you intend to be “out” to, and how you will do so.
- If you do plan to come out to your family over the holidays, have support available, including **PFLAG publications, the Trevor Project**, and affirming social media communities.

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 LGBTQIA+ by phone or in person. Someone who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way... Call or text a friend!

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 didn't 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 support agency. QUEER Family is available for support by email or Discord, even on the ‘off’ weeks for meeting times. 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 a family member of an LGBTQ person-

Before the visit:

- 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.
- 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. Bonus points: If someone calls out your mistake- THANK them rather than apologizing, then work to do better moving forward.

After the visit:

- If things went well with your LGBTQIA+ 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.
- Do not let too much time go by before contacting your LGBTQIA+ loved one, and let them know that you are committed to trying again. Connection is key! [<https://pflag.org/blog/pflagstipsholidays>]

Helpful Reminders

[<https://queerforty.com/9-tips-for-navigating-the-holidays-while-queer>]

1. You Are Allowed to Decide If and How You Want to Celebrate

That's totally up to you and you have the right to not celebrate. If you want to celebrate your own version of the holidays, go for it. You can celebrate Winter, the Solstice, Yule, Sweaters, Sweatpants, Llamas, Sloths, Cookie season, Soup season, snow; friendship, My Little Ponies, the possibilities are endless. Whatever you choose, claim it, make it your own!

2. Avoid Toxic Family and Friends

You heard me; you don't have to put up with toxic people because it's "the holidays." Is your Great Aunt homophobic to you? Does your Uncle intentionally misgender you? Guess what? You don't have to spend time with them! I am giving you (clap it out with me) PER-MISS-ION to let their hateful energy go and move on with your life.

If your family is homophobic, or racist, or just down-right mean, find a reason not to visit this year. Maybe they'll get the hint. Maybe they'll respect your boundaries. Whatever they do, it ain't your problem. Note: If your parents are abusive and/or homophobic I highly suggest the book Toxic Parents. It covers a lot of ground and offers perspective as you journey toward healing.

3. Make an Effort to Spend Time With Supportive People

Lean in to your people, your community, the people that love and support you. Have a group hangout, a potluck, a present exchange, a secret Santa, something, anything that will help you all feel better.

4. Write Down Some Quality Affirmations

• I am awesome and powerful. • I am deserving of love and respect. • I deserve to be treated with kindness. • I am worthy of living a full life. • I will continue to show up for myself. • I am allowed to have my own feelings and thoughts. • My identity is my own. No one else can tell me who I am.

5. Prioritize Yourself

One of the biggest things I've learned over the years is that good things and good feelings don't always "just happen." Sometimes you have to put in a little effort, or do a little planning. Sometimes you have to go out of your way to find and connect with good people. Sometimes you have to set boundaries to protect yourself. Learning to show up for yourself and care for yourself takes time and practice. Remember; you are worthy of good things. You are worthy of a full life of love and equality and acceptance. Show up for yourself and those who love you. You deserve joy! Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity--you may be surprised.

- 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

