

# PRESUMED HETEROSEXUAL



## A FAMILY REALITY

**NATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA**  
FIRST WEDNESDAY OF JUNE

[www.homophobiaday.com](http://www.homophobiaday.com)

## Presumed Heterosexual

### A Family Reality

When a child enters the world, society presumes that he or she will grow up to be heterosexual. However, this will not be the case for one person out of ten.

Although it's more common for people to become aware of their sexual orientation when they're in their teens, for others, it may occur much later. Regardless of when this discovery occurs, it is absolutely essential to keep healthy relations with the family intact.

The Family has been chosen as the theme for the 2005 Edition of the *National Day Against Homophobia* campaign. Its goal is to shine a light on homophobia within the family environment and to draw attention to the realities of sexual orientation issues within families.

#### BEING A GAY OR LESBIAN CHILD

If the family is the first place they experience incidents of homophobia in their lives, then gay and lesbian people will fear rejection from their parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

#### BEING A GAY OR LESBIAN PARENT

When people accept their own homosexual orientation while they're in a heterosexual relationship and, on top of that, they have children, they may have to cope with rejection from their children, grandchildren, family and their circle of friends.

#### BEING SAME-SEX PARENTS

Same-sex parenting is now a reality. For example, female couples give birth to children, both male couples and female couples adopt children or raise the children born during their heterosexual relationships earlier in life. The children of these couples have the right to develop without having to be victims of homophobia just because they have two mommies or two dads.

#### FAMILY AND CIVIL MARRIAGE

Marriage for same-sex couples is a reality in Canada, in Belgium and in the Netherlands.

The debate over marriage for same-sex couples has challenged the notion of family. Many people voice homophobic viewpoints that they justify through their religious beliefs or values that reject homosexuality.

**HOMOPHOBIA** is an attitude, feeling, or aversion towards gay men and lesbians or towards homosexuality in general.

## My son's gay! My daughter's a lesbian!

### No matter what, you'll always be my child

"Mom, Dad, I'm gay." "Mom, Dad, I'm a lesbian." Aside from the odd doubt here and there, parents are rarely prepared for this type of eye-opener. It may be a shock for a mother or father regardless of how old their child is. Accepting the homosexuality of one's own child involves several stages:

#### DISCLOSURE

Before even speaking about it, a boy or girl will have gone down a long path towards personal acceptance. Revealing his or her sexual orientation is a very important moment in life because a child feels that parents need to know. Being able to listen and having an open mind are the best approaches to take.

#### SHOCK

The news may be a shock for parents. Such a reaction is normal for unsuspecting parents. They will need time to deal with this new reality.

#### DENIAL

Being in denial is a common reaction. Refusing to see the reality is a defence mechanism. Some parents react by not wanting to discuss the situation any further.

#### REACTION

Many parents are afraid that their child will never be happy. For other parents, it's the end of a dream — of possibly becoming grandparents.

Parents may feel sad or disappointed. They may also wonder what they did for this to happen to them.

Parents must realize that a child's upbringing does not determine his or her sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is neither a choice nor a preference. Just as children cannot choose their own sexual orientation, parents have no more power to choose their child's sexual orientation.

#### ACCEPTANCE

After some time, parents generally accept their child's sexual orientation. From that point on, they have a new outlook on their child's future. They might even bring their child's partner into their family circle.

This doesn't mean it will always be easy to accept their child's sexual orientation. Parents are not immune to society's views or anti-gay attitudes.

Even so, society has changed. Parents also have their own contributions to make so that society continues to evolve and create a more comfortable place at the table for gay men and lesbians... and for their own child, as well.

#### THOSE AROUND US

Parents of gay and lesbian children are fearful of reactions among their close contacts. What will grandparents, brothers, sisters, friends and colleagues think?

#### PARENTS' BONDS WITH THEIR CHILD

Love is the foundation of parents' bonds with their children. Children remain the same even after their parents have discovered their child's sexual orientation. Why should it be any other way? Parents will find a way to reconcile their personal values with their child's well-being.

#### NEED SOME HELP? RESOURCES ON GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES

##### Provincial Resources

- **Alberta** — Pride Centre of Edmonton  
780-488-3234  
[www.pridecentrefofedmonton.org](http://www.pridecentrefofedmonton.org)
- **British Columbia** — The Centre  
1-800-566-1170  
[www.lgtbcentrevancouver.com](http://www.lgtbcentrevancouver.com)
- **Manitoba** — Rainbow Resource Centre  
1-888-399-0005  
[www.rainbowresourcecentre.org](http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org)
- **New Brunswick** — PFLAG Saint-John  
506-648-9700
- **Newfoundland and Labrador** — Newfoundland Gays and Lesbians for Equality  
709-753-4297
- **Northwest Territories** — Out North  
1-800-661-0844  
[www.outnorth.nt.ca](http://www.outnorth.nt.ca)
- **Ontario** — Pink Triangle Services (Ottawa)  
613-238-1717  
[www.pinktriangle.org](http://www.pinktriangle.org)
- **Prince Edward Island** — Abegweit Rainbow Collective  
1-877-380-5776  
[www.arcpei.isn.net](http://www.arcpei.isn.net)
- **Quebec** — Gay Line  
1-888-505-1010  
[www.gayline.qc.ca](http://www.gayline.qc.ca)
- **Saskatchewan** — Gay and Lesbian Health Services  
1-800-358-1833  
[www.glhs.ca](http://www.glhs.ca)
- **Yukon** — Gala Yukon  
867-333-5800  
[www.gaycanada.com/galayukon](http://www.gaycanada.com/galayukon)

##### National Resources

- **Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition**  
[www.rainbowhealth.ca](http://www.rainbowhealth.ca)
- **EGALE Canada**  
[www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)
- **Fondation Émergence**  
[www.homophobiaday.com](http://www.homophobiaday.com)
- **PFLAG Canada**  
[www.pflagcanada.ca](http://www.pflagcanada.ca)  
1-888-530-6777



## Family Violence

### How to Recognize it

Canada is at the forefront of countries that push for human rights; marriage for same-sex couples is one such example. From a perspective of legal equality, the gay and lesbian communities have turned towards social and humanitarian issues which will lead them to true equality. Among these issues is the problem of domestic violence as it pertains to gay and lesbian realities and people of other sexual diversity.

Violence within the family does indeed affect gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, and people of all sexual diversities. This reality has often been ignored, and hidden, due to factors that are at the same time cultural, religious and social.

Even though people's ways of thinking have improved, gays and lesbians still have to deal with violence within their own family. More often, this violence surfaces when a boy is tagged as being gay and when a girl is viewed as being a lesbian, upon the disclosure of their homosexual orientation; or even when a parent reveals his or her homosexual orientation to family members.

Domestic violence can emerge in various ways, ranging from a simple hint at it to actual physical violence:

- Psychological violence, the most frequent form, includes insinuations, insults, accusations, threats, unjustified punishment, and other wrongdoings between children themselves;
- Monetary and financial violence entails blackmail and threats to cut off allowances; it can go as far as throwing a child out from the family home;
- The most extreme form of violence, physical violence, consists of hitting, confinement, or imposing any other form of corporal punishment.

There are numerous repercussions from domestic violence: it influences children's psychological development; it gives rise to behavioural problems, sexual disorders and, in some cases, leaves permanent physical damage.

Combined with their already vulnerable state during a sexual identity crisis over being homosexual, a climate of domestic violence can mean specific after-effects for gays and lesbians. What's more, numerous studies have proved that gay and lesbian youth have a greater risk of suicide than do heterosexual youth.

In short, parents need to be aware of potential damage caused by a climate of violence within the family.

For additional information:  
[www.canada.justice.gc.ca](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca)



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## Taking Action

### It Concerns Everyone

Fighting homophobia gives true results only when everyone participates. The *National Day Against Homophobia* is the perfect opportunity for:

- **Parents,**  
To tell their children that no matter what their child's sexual orientation, it does not change their love towards them;
- **Teachers and Instructors,**  
To discuss homophobia in-class;
- **Libraries,**  
To showcase books on homophobia;
- **Employers,**  
To implement programmes to combat homophobia;
- **Trade Unions,**  
To organize consciousness-raising activities in the workplace;
- **Community Groups,**  
To heighten awareness among their constituencies;
- **Television Broadcasters,**  
To present special reports and documentaries on the subject;
- **Newspapers,**  
To publish reports and in-depth articles on the subject;
- **Radio Stations,**  
To call upon artists and personalities to speak on the subject, and to play works that foster tolerance;
- **Internet Broadcasters,**  
To remove or refuse any homophobic content and to promote the *National Day Against Homophobia*;
- **Gays and Lesbians who wish to do so,**  
To make their coming out;
- **Legislators, Governments and Municipal Administrations,**  
To declare a *National Day Against Homophobia* and to make a commitment to fight homophobia;
- **The General Public,**  
To make a symbolic gesture.

#### PARENTS

It's the right moment for parents to let their children know that from now on slurs such as "fag(got)", "dike", "homo" and any other derogatory remarks toward gays and lesbians will no longer be tolerated at home and that they will have to eliminate these words once and for all from their vocabulary out of respect for gays and lesbians and their immediate families.

## The Many Faces of Homophobia

### Homophobia surfaces in various ways

Both on a conscious or sub-conscious level, homophobia surfaces in various ways and can even be internalised.

#### Homophobic Attitudes

Feelings or convictions that gays and lesbians are abnormal or sick.

#### Homophobia-inspired Heterosexism

The false belief that everybody is heterosexual and that only heterosexuality is acceptable and legitimate. This belief is based on the idea that the majority sets the norm.

#### Homophobic Language

The use of vocabulary and expressions that can span from jokes to insults.

#### Interpersonal Homophobia

Non-verbal displays of being ill-at-ease, feeling unsafe or experiencing fear when in contact with gay men and/or lesbians.

#### Institutionalised/Systemic Homophobia

The built-in institutional practice of putting gays and lesbians at a disadvantage.

#### Opportunistic Homophobia

Being interested in homosexuality solely for financial or personal gain, and not wanting to be associated with being homosexual or with gay men and lesbians.

#### Internalised Homophobia

An often sub-conscious form of homophobia that is a product of education and social values passed down by society. Gay men and lesbians, too, can adopt homophobic behaviour.

#### Condoned (passive) Homophobia

Silence or lack of response to acts of homophobic language or behaviour that call for someone to intervene and put an end to them.

#### Homophobic Violence

An extreme display of homophobia that leads to violence and can range from verbal assault to hate crimes.

#### HOW TO INTERVENE WHEN YOUTHS DISPLAY HOMOPHOBIC BEHAVIOUR

1. Put an end to harassment by identifying the aggressor(s).
2. Identify the type of harassment by stating that it degrades sexual orientation.
3. Open the debate by informing those involved that such behaviour will not be tolerated.
4. Require the aggressors to modify their behaviour by asking them why they said or acted as they did.
5. Put the victim's mind at ease by inviting him or her to inform you on such behaviours should they reoccur.

## Speaking Out Against Homophobia

### A personal, social, and civic duty

Just as we should for any other form of discrimination, we must speak out against homophobia. This means each and every time, whether we only witness homophobic acts or language or are the actual victims. When faced with such a situation, we need to show our disapproval and demand an end to homophobic behaviour.

Not only can we speak directly to the individual(s) behind homophobic acts, but we can also receive help by lodging a formal complaint.

For details consult [www.homophobiaday.com](http://www.homophobiaday.com).

#### FILING A COMPLAINT

The organizations whose mandate it is to collect complaints in cases of discrimination or incidents of homophobia are:

#### Discrimination

- Provincial and Territorial Human Rights Agencies  
(Listing available at [www.chrc-ccdp.ca/links/default-en.asp](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/links/default-en.asp))
- Canadian Human Rights Commission  
1-888-214-1090 / [www.chrc-ccdp.ca](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca)

#### Harassment in the Workplace

- Unions and labour organizations
- Anti-discrimination and sexual harassment committees
- Provincial and Territorial Labour Standards  
(Listing available at [www.labour-info-travail.org](http://www.labour-info-travail.org))

#### Media

- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)  
1-877-249-2782 / [www.crtc.gc.ca](http://www.crtc.gc.ca)

#### Others

- Police Departments
- School Boards and Management of Education Institutions
- Management of Health Institutions
- Ministries and Government Organisations
- Related Professional Corporations

#### INFORM US

Fondation Émergence needs to be informed of any homophobia-related incident. This help will enable Fondation to target its efforts more effectively.

#### OTHER SEXUAL DIVERSITY

Homophobia is linked to the realities of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals. However, people who belong to other sexual minorities, including transgender and transsexual people as well as cross-dressers, also have to deal with discrimination. Discrimination against these people must also be reported.

Your local LGBT organisation

## Fondation Émergence

### We fight prejudice

Founders of the *National Day Against Homophobia*, Fondation Émergence has the mission to:

- Foster the development of gay men and lesbians;
- Encourage society's inclusion of gays and lesbians;
- Raise the level of awareness of gay and lesbian realities;
- Fight prejudice towards gay men and lesbians;
- Support the missions of Gai Écoute and Gay Line.

National Day  
Against  
**HOMOPHOBIA**

Fondation  
Émergence

We fight  
against  
prejudice

#### Fondation Émergence

P.O. Box 1006, Station C, Montreal (Quebec) H2L 4V2  
Telephone: (514) 866-6788 / Fax: (514) 866-8157  
E-mail: [homophobie@emergence.qc.ca](mailto:homophobie@emergence.qc.ca)  
Website: [www.homophobiaday.com](http://www.homophobiaday.com)

We need your help to continue our mission. Please make a donation!

• By phone:

**1 900 565-1150**

For donations greater than \$50, repeat the transaction in order to obtain the desired amount.

- By check payable to Fondation Émergence Inc.
- By credit card – Visa or MasterCard: (514) 866-6788

Fondation Émergence is recognized by governments as a charitable organisation.  
Registration No: 875907420.

You can also make a donation to LGBT organisations in your region.

The 2005 campaign has been produced with the cooperation of:  
Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition, P.O. Box 3043, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3S9  
1 800 955-5129 / [www.rainbowhealth.ca](http://www.rainbowhealth.ca)

#### ON THE ROAD TO AN INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

The privilege that gays and lesbians have of living within a tolerant society like ours assigns them the moral obligation to help others who live in societies in which homosexuality is rejected and even repressed. Fondation Émergence promotes an *International Day Against Homophobia*. The holding of an international conference in Montréal in 2006, entitled *The Right to be Different* will provide an international scope to such an initiative. For further information: [www.homophobiaday.com](http://www.homophobiaday.com)

The National Day Against Homophobia has been made possible thanks to:

 Department of Justice Canada / Ministère de la Justice Canada

 Canadian Heritage / Patrimoine canadien



Ville-Marie  
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