

Promoting Positive Childhood Experiences in LGBTQ+ families

All children thrive when they have access to the Four Building Blocks of HOPE, but families with LGBTQ+ parents, caregivers, children, and/or youth can face barriers to the building blocks because of bias. Sometimes, there are even multiple intersections of bias, like when LGBTQ+ families also experience racism or cultural taboos. The good news is that families and communities can support and celebrate their LGBTQ+ identities by creating Positive Childhood Experiences for each building block. Let's look at each of the building blocks and how they connect to LGBTQ+ children, youth, and families.



Relationships are the foundation of everything because we learn, grow, and feel safe in relationship. For LGBTQ+ families, finding other LGBTQ+ children and families gives them the chance to share common experiences and strategies for creating Positive Childhood Experiences. There are few tools that families can use to start building relationships. For example, social media can be a great place to find meet ups for LGBTQ+ individuals. A quick search of “LGBTQ organizations near me” can lead you to LGBTQ+ organizations and nonprofits both nationally and in your local community. If you live in an area without a local group, consider partnering with other community members to start a small group.



Being a part of an LGBTQ+ family can feel isolating, especially when children do not see themselves or their families represented in the classroom. Teachers and parents can partner to learn about the students' families and how to make the classroom a richer environment. Getting involved in parent-teacher groups or talking to your local school board members are important ways that you can make sure that LGBTQ+ families are included in school or district-wide decisions.



There are SO many amazing camps and family meetups that you can share with your child. Finding the right program can be as simple as searching for “LGBTQ+ youth camp” on the internet. Children do not forget the feeling of acceptance that comes with being physically surrounded by families that look like theirs. There is a sense of safety that is found in these settings, where children do not need to explain their families to anyone or feel anxious about sharing their own identities. Many of these camps and experiences have scholarships available for families who request them, too.

For those families who are comfortable, Pride parades can give a glimpse of this experience to children. Looking around at a sea of people who are dressed in bright, bold rainbows, showing pride about who they are can be uplifting.



Children need opportunities to talk about their identity or their family structure. Give them developmentally appropriate words that they can use with other children to explain their LGBTQ+ family. Role playing different scenarios is a great way for children to get comfortable with sharing their experiences. A part of role play is brainstorming what to say if another child is negative about their family. In addition, adults can show children how to have conversations about their family during every day interactions such as when someone misgenders a family member.

All children need Positive Childhood Experiences to promote lifelong health, even when they have to deal with adverse community experiences like discrimination. LGBTQ+ families can develop a healthy sense of self and feelings of belonging when families and communities embrace and create queer-specific PCEs for children.