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LGBTQ Resources

Queerspawn

Here's the big difference Alexis (not her real name), 13, can see between her family and any other.

"I get twice the nagging," jokes Alexis. "Everyone else has one mom saying, 'Do your homework,' but I have two. One comes in and says, 'Do your homework.' Then, two minutes later, I hear, 'Do your homework'— from a different mom."

Secret Identity

Alexis used to treat her mom's homosexuality as a "secret identity." She was afraid of being ridiculed at school, so she let everyone assume that her "step-mom" (her mother's partner) was married to her dad instead of her mom.

But that all changed last fall, when Alexis was assigned to write an essay about something that changed her life. Her parents' divorce and her mother's coming out certainly fit the bill. When she read her essay aloud to the whole class, her secret was blown. To her surprise, it was a relief.

"I had major fear back then because . . . I get this vibe from society that my family is not accepted," she says. "But now I'm glad I came out (about having gay moms). I think the world needs to know I'm not going to cower in fear because I'm afraid of people making fun of my family."

Queerspawn

Alexis sometimes feels alone because she only knows two other kids who have gay or lesbian parents. But she's not. According to the Williams Institute, a think tank focused on sexual orientation law, there are about 270,000 other kids under age 18 with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) parents.

Those teens and children sometimes call themselves "queerspawn," a term they created to explain that they're "culturally queer," even if many of them end up being straight.

Survey Says

Researchers have been looking at how having gay parents affects teens for decades. "What we know based on all the research is that a parent's sexual orientation has nothing to do with their parenting abilities," says Abbie Goldberg, assistant professor of psychology at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the primary investigator in several studies

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on LGBT parents and their children. “Much more important ... are the processes that occur *within* the family: For example, how parents and children communicate, how much warmth parents show their children, and whether the child knows that he or she is loved, and so on.”

Homophobia

As Alexis found, being the child of a gay parent isn't always easy. Melissa (not her real name), 17, of Salt Lake City, knows this personally. Her father is gay, and she's seen her sister lose friends because of adults' homophobia toward her father: Her sister's friend wasn't allowed to visit her house after her sister's friend's mom came to pick her up and met her father's boyfriend.

Then, Melissa was sitting in class and overheard her classmates discussing gay marriage. When one said he had a solution for gay marriage, her ears perked up.

“He said, ‘Just kill all gay people,’” she recalls. “I thought, ‘Oh, ouch, dagger in the heart.’ You hear it all the time, like, ‘That’s gay,’ and people calling each other ‘fags’ or ‘queers.’ I didn’t know how to handle the situation. I didn’t want to be questioned. It was more of an issue of personal safety than anything.”

My Superpower Is . . .

Melissa identifies as queer. And as the child of a gay dad, she worries that people will assume her dad “brainwashed” her into being homosexual. But she also knows that she has to be true to herself.

“What having a gay parent has really done for me is show me that, whoever I do date, I will be loved unconditionally, whether male or female,” she says. “Besides the challenges of having gay parents, there are so many benefits. I’ve just been raised in such an open environment. I feel that my situation has provided me with a completely different view on the world than most kids get to experience. I get to see things in a different light and get to understand a lot more. I’m open to things that are different.”