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How would you feel if your child was gay?

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Kylie Orr



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Word of the week: caveat; ka-v?-at; (noun)

Meaning: a warning or proviso of specific stipulations, conditions, or limitations.

When our first son was born, a colleague of my husband's asked the strangest question: "What would you do if your son was gay?"

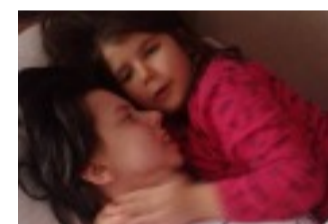
" A choreographed existence that pleased society but created an unbearable inner turmoil is something none of us would wish on our own flesh and blood. "

Given our son was only a few weeks old, his sexual orientation was not foremost in our minds. My husband thought the question was absurd and couldn't imagine what would spur such a random topic from a colleague he conversed with infrequently. He brushed him off with a grunt and a chuckle (and probably a scratch of his family jewels).

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It seems the man had a story to tell, but at the time, my husband was not really in the headspace for listening. Maybe he had suspicions about his child but didn't know how to approach the topic directly?

Perhaps his son or daughter had just come out? Sadly, we will never know what prompted the query.

I hadn't given it much thought again until recently. Our eldest son is five, still not in a world where I could even imagine him and a 'partner' in the same sentence but now I dissect that same question, I find the language intriguing.

I wonder why you'd have to do anything if your child was gay. Being gay is a sexual orientation. What would I, as a parent, be expected to do other than support him or her? Maybe what he meant to ask was "How would it make you feel if your child was gay?"

Who my children choose to have sex with (when they are of the age of consent!), but more to the point, who they fall in love with, has nothing to do with me. Like any parent, I can only hope they find someone who they adore, who treats them with love and respect, and someone with whom they can enjoy and share their life. Male or Female. Gender doesn't seem relevant.

Admittedly, it is effortless for me to say I would be completely open to the idea, when my boys are five, three and zero (as my older two like to refer to him). In reality, if I was faced with the awkward conversation, without caveat, from one of my anxious teenage sons, would I be as liberal in my views?

If one of my sons came forward to express his homosexuality I'd like to think I'd open my arms and invite his boyfriend in to join the family the minute the news was broken but it would be frivolous to profess I would be buoyant with enthusiasm. Hanging my bum cheeks out of my pants in a Mardi Gras parade, although terrifically entertaining, would be unlikely. I recognise there may be shock and perhaps some sadness for a myriad of reasons. I concede I may feel disappointment and apprehension, not because being gay is something to be ashamed of but because despite it being the 21st century, we still live in a world of bigotry, prejudice, lack of acceptance and sometimes violence when it comes to same sex relationships. This is largely based on fear and ignorance, but it exists.

As a society, we have certainly come a long way and I know with time, gay relationships will be as acceptable and mainstream as the female right to vote. It doesn't mean the path will be trouble-free and this is what would be most upsetting to me, as a parent to watch my child struggle through life, on the periphery.

However what would be far greater an injustice would be a child who could not realise who he or she truly was and live a lie for fear of what the reality may mean for everyone around them. A choreographed existence that pleased society but created an unbearable inner turmoil is something none of us would wish on our own flesh and blood. Surely the torment of living with a secret and feeling like they couldn't confide in their own parents would be a considerably worse fate for your child than being open about their sexuality?

The courage for a child to divulge this information to their parents is extraordinary. To have that courage met with formidable disapproval must be crushing.

Most importantly, it needs to be recognised that sexual orientation is one part of a person. Just like your gender, your occupation, your background, where you live and what you value are all parts of you, but not one of them is a single



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So, I will keep this blog and should any of my sons approach me in 15 years time, and say they have something to tell me, I will be sure to reread this and meet the news with compassion. If he instead tells me he has "accidentally written off the car", well my compassion may just turn into horror!

How would you feel if one of your children were gay? Comment on Kylie's [blog here](#).

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