

fact sheet

TIPS FOR RAINBOW FAMILIES



Rainbow families 08.2.22

The journey to parenthood for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people can be exciting and scary. It brings with it some similar and some additional challenges as heteronormative families. The LGBTQI+ parenting path involves many conversations, a lot of planning and decision-making and is influenced by multiple external factors including considerations around conception. There is usually more communication about having a baby and it requires getting very 'real' about becoming parents from the outset. It can strengthen the dynamic and test relationships as well.

Conception, pregnancy and having a little one in your midst, brings social expectations from parents, family and peers. It can also acutely bring to one's awareness our own ideas of what we thought parenthood might look like, potentially in a more confronting way for LGBTQI+ people. We mustn't forget that legal recognition of same-sex marriage is just a few years old in Australia. The general population is not necessarily as non-judgemental or aware as our peer group. Our multi-generational family or even our cultural identity might influence the level of acceptance. While some parts of the community are inclusive and supportive, our LGBTQI+ community still faces discrimination on a macro and micro level.

Questions impacting most people starting a family, range from; How will our relationship change after having a baby? Will my partner still desire me when the baby arrives? How will we provide for the baby financially? Will I be a good parent? How will our parenting styles sync?

LGBTQI+ people face these universal dilemmas along with a multitude of other questions, such as:

- How will I find a specialist that is affirming of my gender and sexuality, and who can help us start a family?

- Should we use a known or unknown donor/surrogate? What will their role be once the baby is born?
- Will people still recognise me as the baby's mum even though my partner is giving birth?
- When will people stop telling me I'm "a good dad for giving mummy a day off?" when we go to the park?
- Will my child feel left out on Mother's Day or Father's Day?
- Will my child experience bullying, stigma and discrimination because their family is different?
- Will I connect to the baby even though I am not genetically related and they may not look like me?
- How will my work colleagues recognise my parenting role? Will I still be eligible for parental leave?
- Is there a place for me in a mother's group?
- We couldn't have immediate connection to the baby during the surrogacy pregnancy period, will I bond with our baby?
- How do we navigate the donor's or surrogate's need for connection to the baby?
- Will my child ever want to meet their donor or surrogate and what will this mean for our family unit?
- How will we navigate the conception and parenting process legally and financially? Are there special legal considerations we need to be aware of?

From the time we take our first steps toward creating our family, societal assumptions can get in the way of us relishing in the path toward parenthood. Gidget Foundation Australia supports all parents as they navigate this period. We want all parents to know their journey is deserving of space and exploration, celebration and support.



GidgetFoundationAustralia
Supporting the emotional wellbeing of expectant & new parents

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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.

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Gidget Angel and Consumer Advocate, **Gen Whitlam** kindly relays her top four tips that helped her family navigate the early days of their parenting journey.

1. It can be daunting trying to figure out how to begin your journey, who to speak to and what questions you might need to ask. It can also be challenging trying to find a safe and inclusive specialist (if that's the route you choose), who is affirming of your gender and sexuality, and who can help you start a family. Reach out to trusted friends and family who have been through the process before, to help you on your journey.
2. Have open and honest communication with all parties involved, from the very beginning of planning a family. Talk about your roles, expectations and concerns, including how you plan on talking to your child about their conception, family and upbringing.
3. Everyone's journey to creating a rainbow family is unique. You'll find that people ask you lots of questions about this journey and your family. These questions can sometimes feel intrusive and hurtful, but mostly come from a place of curiosity and wanting to understand.

Don't feel pressured to answer though, rather do what feels right for you and your family at the time.

4. Surround yourself with people who love and care for you, and who will love and care for the family you are planning on creating. 🌸

SOME ADDITIONAL LINKS YOU MIGHT FIND HELPFUL AT THIS TIME:

Rainbow Families

<https://www.rainbowfamilies.com.au>

Raisingchildren.net.au

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/services-support/services-families/rainbow-families-services> (a National and State based referral database for a variety of LGBTQI+ support)

QLife.org.au

<https://www.qlife.org.au/resources/directory> (a National and State based referral database for a variety of LGBTQI+ support)

Jac Tomlins

<https://jacquitomlins.com/outspoken-families-a-resource-kit-for-rainbow-families/>

