

Coming Out for my Transgender Daughter

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By [Britt Rubenstein](#) Tagged: [coming out](#), [LGBTQ](#), [National Coming Out Day](#), [Tikkun Olam](#), [transgender](#)

There it sat and it had sat for a very long time. We felt exhausted, vulnerable, and full of anxiety. Writing and sending a “coming out” letter to all of our family, friends, colleagues, congregants, and neighbors that our child was transitioning to match their internal gender was one of the scariest things we had done. We were fearful of the responses or lack of responses our letter would generate, so we sent it out very late on a Sunday night. We could go to bed unscathed from the public for one last night before we had to deal with this honesty head on. It was 14 long months after our child came out to us as transgender.

At a time in our lives when our complete focus should have been on our child and family dynamics, we ended up being consumed by worry. How would this affect our lives? The lives of my new daughter and the life of our son? Our friendships, religious life, teacher/student relationships, and my husband’s practice? The worry created a lot of noise and distraction in our heads from the moment we woke until we went to sleep. Our focus was on society and its intolerance towards difference. Looking back, this was a very hard burden to carry. Why is it that when our child needed us most that we had to worry about our society? It was wrong that we ever worried about you.

Fortunately, what we learned after sending our “coming out” letter was that we were stronger than we ever thought and we could face you. We could face you and tell you we are so much happier and healthier than we have ever been. We could face you and say we have done everything right by letting our child transition. We can face you and tell you that our family bond is unbreakable. We can face you because it felt so right to empower other LGBTQ people to live their truths and thrive. More importantly, my daughter can face you because she has us as a family to support her in every way.

We found a way to replace worry with [Tikkun Olam](#). In Judaism, one of the definitions for Tikkun Olam is human responsibility for fixing what is wrong with the world. The things that I see wrong with the world are: LGBTQ youth doing poorly in school because they are distracted by the anxiety they experience of holding on to their secret or the harassment they experience being “out,” children (young and old) too afraid to come out, parents that are not accepting, strangers questioning parents’ abilities to parent, hate propagated in the name of religion, incorrect assumptions of what it means to be LGBTQ, the thought that being LGBTQ will hold you back and make you less than, homelessness, and hate crimes. We can little by little fix what is broken by speaking out against intolerance, attending school board meetings where anti-LGBTQ agendas are being introduced, signing a petition, writing government officials, volunteering with the LGBTQ community, and building up those LGBTQ individuals around us. My daughter has been advocating for the transgender community for a couple of years now through media and speaking engagements, by sitting on various committees, being involved with her GSA, and training school staff. She found her voice because we nurtured her power to use it to fix what is broken. I believe she has accomplished all of this because we had faith in her ability to live an extraordinary life.

I meet with parents who have children that identify as members of the LGBTQ community. So many parents simply feel lost, stuck, or unsure of their feelings. There is nothing better than seeing these families move forward and support their children. They move from feeling powerless to powerful. I am also fortunate to meet people who share their stories and ask me advice on how to come out to their parents. It is such an intimate moment and I always get goosebumps, but most of all I am thankful that people feel they can look to me for help. Of course, I am only a parent with experience and compassion to share with others. Each one of us has this ability inside of ourselves, it is a matter of choice to share compassion. I give what I can of myself to fix what is broken.

To those of you living in silence, sitting with your secret, struggling with your anxiety, waiting for the right time to come out, I hope you can find the people around you who will support and love you. I certainly know that in some families, unfortunately, it will not be safe for you to disclose where you fall on the LGBTQ spectrum. Your safety and well-being should always be considered most important. My heart aches for you because I know the silence is stifling your growth. Always remember that people can change and end up supporting you later. My plea and biggest suggestion is to find a support group. Most support groups' mission statements will include a statement of anonymity for their attendees. Support groups can be a safe place to share stories and experiences, learn, watch others grow, and bond with the LGBTQ community. The first time we went as a family to support group, it felt like the biggest weight had been lifted from us. The group helped grow our confidence and pride for our new family. I want you to get involved with your school's GSA or college LGBTQ community. If your school does not have a GSA then start one! Find a role model within the LGBTQ community that you can confide in. Not everyone has it in them to publicly advocate, but if you do then use your voice to empower yourself and your community.

When children, young and old, come out as part of the LGBTQ community, parents worry that this is a bad reflection on themselves. The reality is that the only reflection you should worry about is your own. Are you looking at a parent in the mirror that you can be proud of? Are you looking at a parent that won't have to look back and ask, *why didn't I do better for my child?* Are you the parent whose child's high school counselor cried to me about her student, who can't come out to their parents because they are too afraid? This counselor, who I just met, knows the most intimate detail of this child's life and their parents don't because they have created something in their home that makes it not safe for their child to live an authentic life. Do you want to contribute to what is broken, or do you want to build a world where LGBTQ individuals can reach their maximum potential and thrive? It is our responsibility to make the world a better place for our LGBTQ loved ones by starting at home. There is a saying, "Don't be your child's first bully." Think about that for a minute. I am happy to say we were our child's first ally. As a parent, I will never walk in my daughter's shoes, but I will proudly walk next to her and always be thankful that my child had enough trust in us to come out as transgender. I wish all of the newly "out" people of the LGBTQ community happiness, courage, strength, love, peace, and power as you live your authentic lives.