



A Monthly E-Newsletter For CenterPeace Parents Volume 2 July 2021

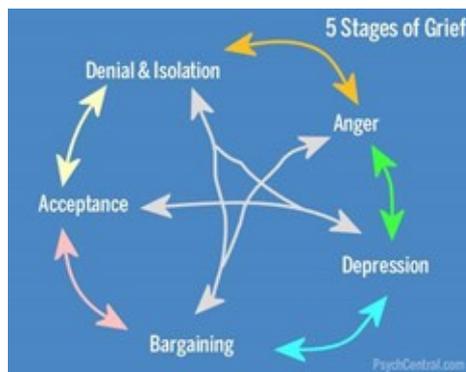
GRIEF: SAYING GOODBYE TO EXPECTATIONS

By Victoria Junek

Grief is an expected emotional response following the death of a friend or loved one. What many do not realize is that grief is not reserved only for situations involving death. It is a natural response to experiencing loss – loss of any kind. When a child comes out, their parents often feel a sense of loss. Not the loss of the child, but the loss of what they have always known and the loss of what they have envisioned for the future of their child.

In their book, "On Grief & Grieving," Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler identified five stages of grief following loss. Over time, these stages have evolved and have been adapted, but still remain the cornerstone of the grieving process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These strong emotions form the framework for coping with life and loss, and for ultimately accepting a new normal. They are tools to help us frame, identify, and define what we may be feeling. However, it is important to understand that the stages are not stops on some linear timeline. One may ricochet from one stage to another, multiple times even, before finally reaching acceptance.

Denial is a defense mechanism of sorts. When a parent first learns their child is LGBTQ+, they often experience shock and numbness and will refuse to acknowledge their child's claimed identity. In this stage, parents will often use words like, "it's just a stage" and "they will grow out of it."



Anger is an emotion that many of us have experience in handling. Anger often masks pain and can reflect the intensity of love. During this stage, a parent may be angry at others ("your friends are a bad influence"), at themselves ("what did I do to cause this?") and even at God ("how can you let this happen?"). Anger is a healthy emotion and a necessary one in the grieving process.

"Sometimes you have to let go of the picture of what you thought it would be like and learn to find joy in the story you are actually living." - Rachel Marie Martin

Parents can become lost in a maze of "if only's" or "what if's" in the **bargaining** stage, desperate for life to return to what it was, and filled with unjustified guilt.

During **depression**, parents can experience intense sadness, often withdrawing from others. Hopelessness can set in, making one feel isolated and alone.

Eventually **acceptance** dawns: this is the new reality. Parents will start to have more good days than bad days as they emerge from resistance.

It can be very freeing to recognize that the grieving process parents go through when their child comes out also is a necessary tool for coping. If you are walking this path, seek out others to walk alongside you – a trusted professional, a friend or fellow parent, or a support group. This journey through the stages of grief doesn't need to be navigated alone.



CHRIS & LIZ MOORE

In that moment when your child says to you, "I am gay," you think, "This isn't happening! I've always done the right thing. I taught my child about God. I took them to church every time the doors were open. They were a leader in the youth group, everyone thought they would be a minister! This can't be true." But deep down you realize you already knew. You hadn't allowed yourself to accept it, but you knew. When my son sat on the foot of my bed and tearfully told me he has prayed his whole life for God to take this from him and God didn't, I realized I had been wrong. Being gay is not a choice. My son is who God created him to be.

I only had a moment to decide how to respond. Many would say my child turned his back on God. I know that wasn't true, but how can I explain why God didn't answer his prayers? How can I make him understand that when I didn't? I had no words. But I had to choose. Do I tell him that he must not love God anymore? Or do I wrap him in my arms and tell him that I believed him, and we would walk through this together?

I (we) chose the latter. We love our son and being gay could never change that. He was created in the image of God and God loves my son, just as he is. He is not defined by being gay, he is defined as a child of God. A child worthy of love and mercy. A child who loves others fiercely and who loves God with all of his heart. We chose to live into the mystery of God and His mercies.

Being the parent of a gay child is a hard road to walk. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. The path is filled with so much fear, some of which is your own. Even more of which is from those who choose to create beliefs based on that fear, rather than taking the time to sit down with someone who is gay and listening to their story trying to understand.



Nevertheless, I am thankful that God chose us to walk this journey. It has changed who we are. It has made us love more deeply. It has made us realize that no one on this earth has all the answers. And it has made us even more grateful to God for what He has done in our lives.

Our love for our children has always been unconditional and we have always loved others. But this road has created a deep desire in our hearts to make sure that not only our children are loved unconditionally, but that every child or person we come in contact with

is loved unconditionally – no one should ever have to walk alone. And for that, we are grateful.

Diversity is having a seat at the table, **inclusion** is having a voice, and **belonging** is having that voice heard.

By Unknown

By Liz Moore

LET'S TALK TERMS

By Dena A Edwards

Finding out your child is LGBTQ+ pushed you into an alien world. a first-time Starbucks visit: "Can I have a double ristretto venti half-soy organic double-blended frappe?" What?? The letters and lingo of your child's new world can be just as confusing.



Let's start working our way through some of the different layers, starting with definitions of orientation and gender identities, provided by the Human Rights Campaign.

Sexual orientation

An inherent or enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Gender identity

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation so can identify as gay, straight, bi-sexual, etc.

Gender dysphoria

Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Nourish Your Faith



THE LONG LOVING GAZE OF GOD

By Chris Altrick

In your journey as a parent of an LGBTQ+ child, your ears will hear many messages from others about your child and you. It is vital to develop a strategy to combat untrue and life-draining messages about self-identity, and replace them with true and life-giving messages.

In the 16th century, Ignatius of Loyola proposed a practice for doing this called "The Long Loving Gaze of God."

Central to this exercise is the phrase spoken by God at Jesus' baptism: "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17 ESV). These words were spoken over Jesus before he preached transformative

sermons or performed life-changing miracles. It was a statement of Jesus' intrinsic value, simply by existing, He was a beloved child of God's. The same is true of you and of your child.

Take a few moments a few times each week and practice this exercise. First, picture God looking at you with love and delight. Hold that image for a minute or two. Then hear God say to you, "You are my beloved child." Rest with those words for a minute or two. Second, picture God looking at your child with love and delight. Hold that image. Then join God (silently) in saying to your child, "You are my beloved child." Rest with those words.



UPCOMING EVENTS

PeacePrints Retreats

A safe place for parents to express their feelings with fellow believers in Christ

[More information](#) on PeacePrints

- Oct. 15-17, 2021 - Nashville TN - [register here](#)
- Mar 25-27, 2022 - North Texas



Group Spiritual Direction for Parents

A place to help grow your awareness of God's work in your and your family's life and to share this spiritual journey with others

[More information](#) on Group Spiritual Direction

Tapestry Retreats for LGBTQ+ Christians

A place for adult LGBTQ+ Christians to find community and a deeper connection with God [More information](#) on Tapestry

MOVIE REVIEW: "LOVE, SIMON"

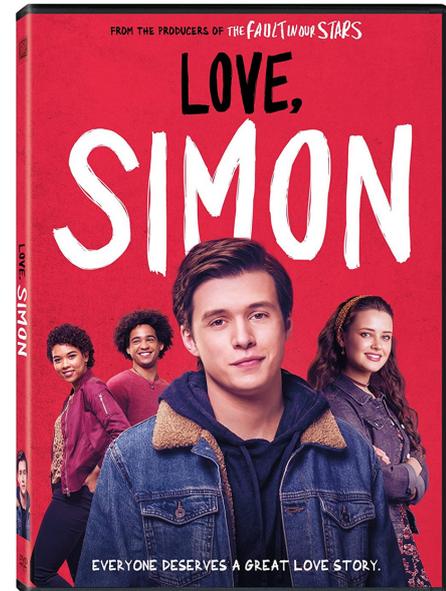
Simon Spier is a teenager in high school and has a secret: He's gay and doesn't know what to do with that. This story is one that is repeated all over, all the time. Yet "Love, Simon" allows those of us who don't wrestle with orientation or identity to take a peek into the life of a gay teenager, one who's kind and sweet and has friends, but is holding back.

Simon reads an anonymous blog written by a fellow classmate who also is secretly gay and scared. Throughout the film, he and "Blue" have nameless conversation, getting closer while school marches on. Eventually, Simon is outed by a friend who wants to deflect attention from himself which creates a whole new layer of difficulty in the coming out romantic story.

I don't want to spoil the story, but the last 30 minutes of this film had me in a hot mess. As a dad, I saw so much of me and my story in "Love, Simon." My recommendation is to watch it with your LGBTQ+ child and afterward, ask: "So what did you think about that?" This movie is a great conversation opener.

I've seen this film at least 3 times. The first time was in the theater with my wife Gail, our daughter Megan, and one of her best friends from church (who is gay). As we leave, still a hot mess, I ask the same question: "So what did you think about that?" His reply: "This is the first time I've seen on screen a story that's like me, and it was so normal." Enter hot mess, phase 2. Currently available on Hulu, Amazon Prime, AMC On Demand, and Apple TV.

By Gil Vollmering



A recommended resource list can be found on the [CenterPeace Resource Page](#)



CenterPeace

A place to belong

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