



When Your Gay or Lesbian Child Marries: A Guide for Parents

Deborah M. Merrill Clark University

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Massachusetts became the first state in the country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2004, and after the landmark decision of *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015, same-sex marriage is legal in all fifty states. More than 70,000 same-sex couples have married in the U.S. Although these couples have the right to marry, it is not without its costs to their families, particularly to their relationships with their parents. Some parents may not accept their child's decisions; others don't understand how marriage may be different for their children or the obstacles that they may face in being part of a same-sex union.

When Your Gay or Lesbian Child Marries: A Guide for Parents examines how same-sex marriage changes the relationships between parents and their gay or lesbian adult children. It is also a guide for parents to better understand how parent/child bonds are transformed from the time of the child "coming out of the closet" to the raising of his or her own children. It will also serve to help parents understand the contours of same-sex marriage and their child's struggles as he or she navigates marriage, parenthood, and family relationships over time. Based on interviews with married (or previously married) gay men and women who had at least one parent alive during their marriage as well as parents who have both a married gay/lesbian child and a married heterosexual child, the author offers stories from people who illustrate a range of experiences. From coming out, to raising children, from wedding day ceremonies to separations and divorce, the stories found in these pages show how families can come together or fall apart, but also offer hope and guidance for those who want to be supportive parents and in-laws, and to adult children who hope to maintain healthy relationships with their parents after marriage.

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