

# LGBTQ Parenting

- Concerns -
- Barriers -
- Psychosocial Considerations -
- Compassionate Care -

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# Concerns

- Societal disapproval/stigma – negative views of LGBTQ folks as parents (i.e. judgments re: “lack of gender role model”)
- Internalized homophobia/transphobia
- Fears about lack of genetic connection
- Worries that children will be harmed by discrimination
- Options/ways to go about having/parenting kids & associated ideas thereabout
- Costs
- Lifestyle changes

# Associated Discussions

- Acknowledge the dominant social discourse that states that biology is the strongest tie
- Deconstruct beliefs about connection through biology/genes
- Explore and air fears about non-genetic parent feeling less connected to child
- Educate: Connection comes through caregiving

# Discussions, Cont'd...

- Unpack any beliefs/stigma that sexual orientation or gender identity might negatively affect one's ability to parent
  - Respect that these internalized fears may be rooted in someone's own familial & social experience/learnings
- Take time to consider how a family might address issues of discrimination or bullying
  - Empowerment & reminder of people's existing resources/skills
  - Education, language, community, modeling, etc.
- Separate out roles of parenting from gender/sexual orientation of parent(s)
  - Acceptance, nurturing, socializing, transmission – not tied to gender/sexual orientation

# Discussions, Cont'd...

“So... How’re we gonna do this?”

- Alternative or Donor Insemination:
  - Anonymous Donors
  - Known Donors
  - Autologous if frozen (in advance of starting HRT, if trans identified)
  - Known Recipients
  - Who will carry?
- Surrogacy
- Adoption – Domestic, LGBTQ friendly?
- Foster Parenting
- Step Parenting

# Possible Barriers to Care

- History of stigma/pathologizing from within the medical & mental health fields
  - This may keep folks out of your offices to begin with & make seemingly “small” interactions carry more weight
- Cost
  - Limited insurance coverage
  - High cost of assisted reproductive technology
  - No guarantees
- Discrimination
  - International adoption not available to out same-sex households
- Legal steps/protections – and cost thereof
  - Recognition of relationship/parental status; 2<sup>nd</sup> parent adoption

# Psychosocial Considerations

- Thinking ahead – sometimes what feels like WAY ahead - & associated resentment
  - Puberty blockers / HRT
  - Alternately, feeling a sense of urgency to begin affirming tx w/o considering ahead – effect of HRT
- Managing dysphoria (body, clothing, pronouns, reception by others, etc.)
- Maintaining connection to community/battling isolation
- Possible higher risk of post-partum depression (?)

# Psychosocial Considerations Cont'd...

- Unpacking societally & socially constructed roles/ideas about parenting
- Working through ideas about “how to parent” – i.e. chestfeeding
- Financial support/legal protections – coparent adoption
- Family structure/involvement – donors, chosen family, etc.



## Example: Chestfeeding

- Duration
- Supply (at-chest Supplementer)
- Dysphoria
- Connecting w/ Infant
  - Societal judgments
- Nutrition
- Effect of hormones
- In transmen, possible regrowth of tissue, post surgery
- In transwomen, need for supplements/pumping

Image: Trevor Macdonald, milkjunkies.net



# Compassionate Care

- Acknowledge the context & power dynamic – work towards allyship
- Language matters
  - Pronouns, names, titles, asking permission, etc.
- Visibility matters – art & other visual aids, intake forms, patient statements
- Ask & take time to understand, explore – you don't have to be the expert all the time
- Understand & be able to make appropriate legal recommendations (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> parent adoption) if needed - know the stakes & associated feeling of vulnerability
- Understand existing resources & think creatively (without judgment) re: family structure, funding, etc.

# Online Resources

birthforeverybody.org

Series: Welcoming All Families, Lamaze research blog

<https://www.scienceandsensibility.org/p/bl/et/blogid=2&blogaid=548>

milkjunkies.net

<http://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12884-016-0907-y>

Facebook: Birthing and Breast or Chest-feeding Trans People and Allies (closed group)

FenwayHealth.org