Tips for a Happy Holiday for LGBTQ People

The holidays can be a stressful time for LGBTQ people or their families, but there are several strategies that you can use to help reduce stress and create a happy holiday this year.

If you are a member of the community...

- **Don’t assume** you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised.
- **Realize** that your family’s reaction to you may **not** be because you are LGBTQ. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
- **Remember** that “coming out” is a continuous process. You may have to “come out” many times.
- **Don’t wait** for your family’s attitude to change to have a special holiday. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a LGBTQ child.
- **Let your family’s judgments** be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
- If it is too difficult to be with your family, **create your own holiday gathering** with friends and loved ones.
- If you are transgender, **be gentle** with your family’s pronoun “slips.” Let them know you realize how difficult it is, but also provide them with education when appropriate.

Before the visit...

- **Make a decision** about being “out” to each family member before you visit.
- If you are partnered, **discuss in advance** how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
- If you bring your partner home, **don’t wait until late** into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.
- **Have alternate plans** if the situation becomes difficult at home.
- Find out about local LGBTQ resources.
- If you do plan to “come out” to your family over the holidays, have support available.

During the visit...

- **Focus** on common interests.
- **Reassure** family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
- If you are partnered, **be sensitive** to his or her needs as well as your own.
- **Be wary** of the possible desire to shock your family.
- **Remember to affirm yourself.**
- **Realize** that you don’t need your family’s approval.
- **Connect with someone else who is LGBTQ**—by phone or in person—who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.

After the visit...

- Know that there are many **resources** on campus to help you process through any difficult situations you may have encountered and to provide you with support:
  - Counseling Center: 336.758.5273 - counselingcenter.wfu.edu
  - LGBTQ Center: 336.758.4665 - lgbtq.wfu.edu
  - Chaplains Office: 336.758.5017 - chaplain.studentlife.wfu.edu