

# Episode 35 - Non-affirming

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

lgbtq, affirming, breathe, respond, parents, people, person, website, child, support, unsupportive, episode, listener, wrote, boyfriend, sex, community, topic, disagree, situation



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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ T. Live podcast transforming the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child filled with awesome guests practical strategies and moving stories host Heather Hester always makes you feel like you're having a cozy chat. Wherever you are on this journey right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. And here is Heather for this week's amazing episode.



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Welcome to



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Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ team. I am so happy you are here.



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Today,



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I will start looking at the topic of how to handle non affirming family, friends and community. I say start because as I've been researching this topic, I realize just how broad and deep it is. But before I get into it, I want to give a shout out to a listener whose name

I'm not sharing for privacy purposes, who reached out with a specific situation she is navigating. You know who you are. And thank you. Thank you. Thank you for lighting a fire under me to complete this episode. As you all know, I get lost in my research and I have been adding to this episode for quite some time. Her email prompted me to at least get a one on one out there and see where it takes us. As I've been writing this, I've been particularly stumped by word choice. For instance, the subtle distinction in the meanings of handle, cope with, manage, deal with respond to and approach make a big difference and reading, processing and presenting this topic. It really boils down to the relationship you have with the person or the people with whom you're communicating. In addition, I have learned that certain words and phrases capture certain instances more accurately. The phrase non affirming tends to relate to those who do not affirm based on religious beliefs. The word unsupportive is used to describe those who disagree, or are opposed to their LGBTQ child, friend or community based on bias, ignorance or beliefs that are not religious in origin. coping with managing and responding to non affirming or unsupportive people is an issue that not only well our LGBTQ kids be faced with throughout their lives, but we as parents, advocates and allies well as well. So how do we do this with a spirit of grace, patience and education, while also maintaining protective boundaries and empowering our kids? The answer is carefully. We need to be clear on what we hope to accomplish by engaging in a conversation around this topic.



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To



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access this clarity, we need to have educational points of reference beyond our intuition and unconditional love. We also need to have a strong sense of boundaries, ours, as well as those with whom we engage the types of situations and conversations our LGBTQ kids and we as parents, advocates and allies will encounter will be as numerous and nuanced as all the stars in the sky. I have come up with a few general suggestions as well as three basic but broad reaching examples to start with a few suggestions for the grace we can give



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one, give them time, it takes everyone time to adjust to the change in their movie reel. And as you know, so many factors go into



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this to



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give them a fax. Knowledge is not only power, it is calming, centering and confidence and fusing. Have the basic facts down that are specific to your child, and then begin to expand your knowledge from there. The resource section of my website is a great place to start.



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Three



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remind them that there is more to your child than sex. People who are non affirming or unsupportive, get really stuck on LGBTQ sex. Gently remind him ever you're responding to of three things.



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First,



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LGBTQ sex is no different than straight sex. It is an act of love, and connection to sex is one of many parts that make up one's identity. And three, as many of you have adolescents and teenagers sex is not even on the table yet. One of the gifts of understanding one's identity and orientation at a young age is the time and space allowed to explore one's uniqueness. These suggestions are helpful in most situations. They allow you to breathe as well as to prepare the examples I'm going to share next

range and situation and response. The first is the one my just brave listener brought to me. her teenage son has a boyfriend whose parents are in the denial phase, insisting that this is a phase, and that he will marry a woman. My listener has a safe loving and affirming home, and her son's boyfriend knows he is welcome to be his authentic self there. There are two questions here. First, can or should she reach out to her son's boyfriend's mom? And second, if she does reach out? What should she say? This is tricky. But honestly, I can't think of a situation where we advocate for our kids or try to navigate a conversation with any non affirming or unsupportive person. That isn't at least a little tricky. So here are my thoughts on this. Unless an opportunity to talk with the mom manifests organically, she would likely deflect or reject any outrage because she's in the denial phase. Remember all the way back to Episode Two. Denial can last for quite some time. And while in this stage, one's mind remains closed and unwilling to consider the possibilities. Any communication would need to come directly through her son. Since he feels safe and accepted in this listeners home, she can let him know that she is willing to support him in any way, including talking with or supporting his mom in terms of helpful books, websites, articles, podcasts, or even conversation if she is willing and open. By providing support and acceptance, she is empowering both her son and his boyfriend. As much as we just want to yell, oh my goodness, this is your son, please love him and see him for who he authentically is. We can't do that. So we breathe, and we control what we can ourselves and showing up for the people we love as our best selves. Whether or not his parents move from denial to acceptance is definitely not something we can control. My listener can model this behavior though, and know that it is making a difference in the lives of both her son and his boyfriend. The second example is how to respond to a non affirming Christian family member or friend. I have spent many hours researching this one. Oh my goodness, the stories that are out there, the courage, the strength, the honesty, the willingness to do the work. To be honest, this example is a bit triggering for me because I've faced it multiple times already in our journey. The upside of that is I have tons of resources. The more I learn, the more I am inspired to find even better resources and plans of action. Two things make this example different from the first the fact that it has a family member or friend means boundaries are not as defined. And those who strongly believe that being LGBTQ is a sin tend to approach this topic with a lot of fire. So how can we prepare



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know your facts Stay calm and breathe. If you don't have an answer to a specific question, it's okay. I have handled this by saying that I know to the core of my being that God created Connor to be exactly who he is. And then I'm happy to share research that supports that feeling. One of the articles I came across was from the website queer theology. It was a letter to LGBTQ kids with non affirming parents. In addition to an

extensive list of empowering questions for kids to ask their parents, there were two fabulous passages I want to share with you. You deserve love and support that isn't tainted by harmful theology. You deserve affirmation of all the parts of your identity and body. You deserve to be seen as whole and holy. And you deserve to surround yourself with people who affirm you and protect your heart by limiting or cutting off access to people who do not. God loves supports, accepts and affirms you as an LGBTQ person, just as you are. And the Bible makes clear from Genesis to Revelation, that God has a preference for the oppressed, marginalized and outcast. God is fighting for you, your family should too. I of course will link this in the show notes. If this is a topic that speaks to you. Please take some time to read through this well research site. You might want to buckle your seatbelt for the second resource I'm going to share. I came across a blog written by Nathaniel Totten Greene that absolutely blew me away. First of all, low writing, oh my goodness, it is at the same time exquisite and really intense. The author's sheer intellectual depth is so impressive. And his passionate presentation is simply astounding. So the entry I'm going to share is a letter he wrote to his non non affirming friends. He takes four of the most common comments or justifications that those who are not affirming us, and explains why they are incorrect. And what would be a more thoughtful way of addressing a community. I'm just going to share three of these and we'll only skim the surface. I kind of feel like I almost have to insist that you read the entire piece because it is just so beautiful. And I of course will link it in the show notes for you. One, love the sinner Hate the sin. This one essentially divides a person into two parts, the person and the behavior. However, just as those who are straight do not exist without their sexuality. Neither is one who is LGBTQ. The difference is that one is societal a normative and the other isn't. So which part is hated

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to?

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I love you, but I disagree. This has the same feeling as no offense. But what follows is almost always offensive. Adding a qualifier does not make it otherwise. We know that you disagree ethically, morally, philosophically and otherwise, but who our kids inherently are is not something that can be simply disagreed with. Love is not unconditional, if it has to be qualified. And three, the Bible clearly says First of all, No, it doesn't. Second, there's not one singular interpretation. And third, even if the Bible specifically condemned homosexuality, which it doesn't, it does actually condone slavery selling our daughters killing those who work on the Sabbath, and it promotes the inferiority of women, all of

which we as a society have rejected as inhumane, morally wrong and just plain incorrect. A belief system should not be based on cherry picking. I want to close this example with a quote from a letter a lovely woman named Beth wrote on the P flag website. This is just a piece from her letter. What if turning your back on your child or anyone was not turning toward God? What if the opposite were true? What if it was an opportunity to practice the radical love and acceptance that Jesus



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taught?



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God does not want you to sacrifice your relationship with your child or your child's life to please Him. And if he does, is that a god you really want to serve? You may be afraid of what people in your family or your church may say, you may even be asked to leave your church if you choose to embrace and defend your child. But I believe that if there is a God, that is the kind of love he has for us, and that he wants to see us give and turn to our children. The third example is how to respond to a homophobic family member, friends or community.



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We all



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know at least one person who has some form of prejudice, or bias. It is worth reminding ourselves at this point that we cannot change the way others think or feel. We can only change how we respond to them, and to set boundaries. Like I said earlier in this episode, being clear on your boundaries will help you remain calm. You absolutely do not need to sit silently when someone says hurtful things or makes homophobic remarks. Educate yourself so that you can respond with facts, statistics, and logic. Remind yourself that homophobia is based on a lack of knowledge and fear. have realistic expectations of what you would like the outcome of any conversation to be. Remember that shifts take time. I have a few tips for all of our LGBTQ loves specifically, someone else's homophobia is not your problem or your fault. I want you to repeat in your head. This is not my issue. This is theirs. It is okay to remain hopeful that time will shift the homophobic person's attitude.

Remember, homophobia is generally a lack of education, and just plain fear rearing its ugly head. Absolutely stand up for yourself. If you feel comfortable doing so. Many people do not mean to be offensive. It is again a lack of education or fear. Find support in the form of therapy, support groups for LGBTQ people, or on line groups like the Trevor Project. And remember that you are not alone and that you are loved. Before I wrap up this episode, I want to speak directly to those of you who were asked to listen to this episode. Are those made uncomfortable by what I shared? Thank you for listening. The fact that you made it to this point shows love and a desire to consider the possibilities. All of us who are in or our parents, advocates and allies of the LGBTQ community appreciate and honor your effort. For everyone listening. If you have questions or situations that you want me to explore in an episode, let me know. My email is on the show notes and on the website. So much love and hugs to all of you. Until next time.



19:36

Thanks so much for joining Heather today. Remember to just breathe. Take a few minutes every day to calm and center yourself. Reach out anytime with ideas, questions or feedback. Please rate and review just breathe on your favorite platform. Subscribe to Heather's website, [www.chrysalis-mama.com](http://www.chrysalis-mama.com) to receive her monthly newsletter and stay informed. Join the private Just breathe Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies and share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone.