

GAY FATHERS

**Some of their
stories, experience, and advice**

**30th Anniversary Edition
Reprint 2008**

Gay Fathers of Toronto

Looking Back Thirty Years Later

In 1978 a group of gay men who were also fathers banded together to establish a peer support group for themselves and other gay fathers. These men had created families the only way then possible, in a relationship with the mother of their children. Nevertheless, facing an unwelcoming world they wanted to reconcile their conflicted desires and emotions. Later in 1981 a few men associated with the then 3-year-old **Gay Fathers of Toronto** organization published a collection of their experiences related to "coming out", of their desires and dreams, of their fears and disappointments, and of their ongoing relationships with their children, [ex-]wives, and partners. Their book, *Gay Fathers*, seems to have been the first of its type ever published.

Since then legal and social changes have profoundly altered gay men's lives and opportunities in 21st-century Canada. Single, coupled, and married [GBQ] men can start families by adoption. Co-parenting with a woman – often a lesbian – or with a lesbian couple is another option, and a growing number of men start their own families through surrogacy arrangements. Government-supported queer parenting programs are now an integral part of the programs at **The 519 Community Centre** and the **Sherbourne Health Centre**. The course **Daddies & Papas 2B** - observing its 5th anniversary - helps GBQ would-be fathers determine the parenting approach best suited to their personal situations. And many gay men still become fathers in traditional marriages.

In bygone years, some men might never have fulfilled their desires; others led secret, dual lives. Without doubt it is much less stressful today to live wholesome satisfying lives as out gay men. Indeed that possibility entices more married men to come out, and GFT still supports them as each man finds the path that best fits him and his family's situation. Yes, 2008 is very different from 1978, in part due to those men who contributed to *Gay Fathers* in 1981. Yet, notwithstanding the better social environment of 21st-century Canada, during the man's period of transition his emotions -- anticipation and fear, dreams and stress, hopes and despair -- are frequently nearly identical to those described in 1981.

We are grateful that they shared their experience during a more perilous time. Their courage and their insights and their willingness to share that experience continues to inform and help men.

Paul Carr
father of 3 (out in 1996)

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<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca>



**For gay fathers
to tell them they are not alone.**

Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.

— Oscar Wilde
Lady Windermere's Fan

Yet each man kills the things he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

— Oscar Wilde
The Ballad of Reading Gaol

"The love that dare not speak its name" is such a great affection as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the "Love that dare not speak its name," and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. That it is so, the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it."

— Excerpted from Oscar Wilde's reply to the Solicitor General in the second of Wilde's three trials. The crown prosecutor had asked him to explain a phrase he had used in a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas.

All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death.

— Oscar Wilde
De Profundis



Detail from Blake's *The Good and Evil Angels*. 1795. London, Tate Gallery

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