

24TH ANNUAL LGBTQ-FRIENDLY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

November-December 2022 | Issue #145

Gay Parent

LGBTQ+ PARENTING

gayparentmag.com

ACTRESS CLEO KING,
CAMILLE THORNTON
& THEIR SON, TITUS

GREY'S ANATOMY ACTOR ALEX BLUE DAVIS
& WIFE WRITER MIRANDA RUSSO

STRESSORS ASSOCIATED WITH RAISING CHILDREN
BY CHRISTOPHER KATIS

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE FAMILY BUILDING RESOURCES

A LEADER IN LGBTQ PARENTING RESOURCES SINCE 1998





Mental Fortitude

By Christopher Katis

Maintaining good health when you're a parent can be a

struggle. Time constraints and busy schedules can mess with your body, while the added stress isn't doing you any favors. So, it's probably not a surprise to learn that during the pandemic the physical and mental health of parents suffered.

According to a study by the American Psychological Association (APA), during the pandemic 80% of fathers and 66% of mothers reported unwanted weight gain, while 87% of dads and 77% of moms had sleeping problems. To cope with all the stress, 48% of the guys and 29% of the women turned to drinking more alcohol.

LGBTQ+ parents have the added stressors associated with raising chil-

The author, Christopher Katis (standing left), with husband Kelly, and their children (seated), Gus (left) and Niko.

dren in a "non-traditional" family that can impact our mental health. What's interesting – although not part of the APA study – is that queer parents generally don't seem to display any greater mental health symptoms than straight ones.

According to research conducted by Rachel Farr, Ph.D. and Casey Vasquez at the University of Kentucky, there was no difference over a five-year period in mental health symptoms between lesbian, gay and straight parents. Dr. Farr said, "This may point to heightened resilience among lesbian and gay parents given that their expe-



periences are occurring in the context of persistent and ongoing cultural stigma and discrimination."

That's right, all the crap we've had to deal with for *continued on page 48*



GEORGE SCHOOL

BE WHO YOU ARE. TRUST WHO YOU CAN BECOME.

- Diverse and Global Community
- Signature Academic Program and Innovative Schedule
- More than 40 Advanced Courses (AP & IB)
- 41 Visual and Performing Arts Course Options
- 25 Varsity Sports, State of the Art Facilities
- Comprehensive College Counseling Program
- Financial Aid and Merit Aid Available
- 240 Acre Campus

**CONTACT ADMISSION@GEORGESCHOOL.ORG
WWW.GEORGESCHOOL.ORG**

To expand your child's
compassion and ambition

start
with 1



At **PS1**, children grow up in—and help shape—an exceptionally joyful, empathetic, dynamic learning community. From this intentionally created microcosm your child emerges excited and prepared to change the wider world for the better.

www.psone.org
310-394-1313 x 107
Inquire & Connect with Us!
Apply Online Now!



www.psone.org



pustebblume
INTERNATIONAL PRESCHOOL

a nurturing setting that
cultivates the growth and
development of your child

German & Spanish Language Immersion



preschool program
for 2-5 yr. olds

afterschool program
for school-age children
(open to students from
other schools)

spacious, light filled
facility in Chelsea



www.pustebblumenyc.org
info@pustebblumenyc.org

www.pustebblumenyc.org

www.theidealteacher.com Gay Parent Magazine November-December 2022 Issue #145

Mental Fortitude continued from page 46

simply being gay may actually make us more resilient when it comes to our mental health. There are several possibilities why this might be based on this study and other research coming out of Dr. Farr's lab.

"An example of this resiliency manifested in everyday life is through a strong sense of self-worth and positive identity, including one's LGBTQ+ identity," notes Dr. Farr. "Another is through effective coping strategies. Positive coping can minimize negative health impacts of experiencing stigma and discrimination by lessening the chances that these experiences are internalized. Focusing on what can be changed, such as attitudes, actions, or emotions, can be beneficial," she says.

And our resiliency may actually help our kids, as well. According to Dr. Farr, other research about similar topics have shown that kids of LGBTQ+ parents may benefit through parenting practices that seem to provide them with unique skills such as dealing with stigma and discrimination.

"These parents are able to draw from a variety of other practical and emotional resources in their life, being buffered by the positive effects of social support from partners, friends, the LGBTQ+ community, and family – including *chosen* family," Dr. Farr adds. The research also indicates that being raised in queer families frequently instills in kids positive attitudes about inclusivity and openness to diversity.

But there are other sources for that resiliency as well. It can also be cultivated through positive and supportive relationships that bring joy and laughter. Even a supportive workplace and access to affirming health services can contribute to this resiliency. Affirmation to LGBTQ+ people, especially amidst challenges stemming from stigma and discrimination, is equally as important.

So how does all that resiliency by LGBTQ+ parents translate to our children? Well, Dr. Farr says that the broader literature on this topic shows real beneficiaries of this resiliency are the kids of queer parents. Apparently, our parenting practices seem to provide our kids with unique skills that help them cope with stigma or discrimination. It's probably not surprising that having two dads or two moms give kids a personal knowledge and understanding about LGBTQ+ people and a sense of belongingness in the LGBTQ+ community. But our kids also tend to foster attitudes of inclusivity and openness to diversity – they also experience positive feelings about their LGBTQ+ parents and family.

What's really fascinating is that the study found that lesbian moms and gay dads (as well as straight moms) perceive themselves as more competent in their roles as parents compared to straight dads. This in turn has a really interesting effect on the children of LGBTQ+ kids who have taken part in this study: they feel closer to their parents. Dr. Farr's research discovered a link between parenting competence and parent-child relationship. That connection may represent a unique strength among lesbian and gay parents.

But kids of gay parents can also experience cultural stigmas. It's not unusual for them to be teased, bullied, excluded, or ostracized on the basis of their families. I remember one birthday party held at our house at which one boy whom

our son considered a good friend, wasn't allowed to attend
Gay Parent Magazine November-December 2022 Issue #145 www.gayparentmag.com 3

because of his parents' "deeply held religious beliefs." Our kid just rolled with the punches. When I apologized, he told me I hadn't done anything wrong – the other kids' parents were at fault.


Of course, stigmatization doesn't have to be so blatant. It can come from myriad of more subtle sources as well. "It comes in different forms, including through institutions in the form of policies, laws and practices," Dr. Farr explains. "It also can stem from acquaintances, the media, religious organizations, businesses, and schools, all of which can suggest that certain groups of people, in this case, LGBTQ+ parents, are 'less than' or abnormal."

As part of the study LGBTQ+ participants were asked about "homonegative microaggressions" – more subtle slights or insults related to being queer. Dr. Farr used the measure developed by Wright and Wegner in 2012 which includes questions such as, "How often have family members simply ignored that you are an LGB individual?", "How often have people made statements about why gay marriage should not be allowed?" and "How often have people made offensive remarks about LGB people in your presence, not realizing your sexual orientation?"

These homonegative microaggressions can surface in very blatant ways. Like asking gay men for fashion advice or deciding what someone should look like based on their sexual orientation. Back in the 1980s, I remember amusedly watching an episode of a talk show dedicated to "Lesbians who don't look lesbian!" And over the years, both my husband Kelly and I have been told that we "don't look or act gay" – I'm not sure exactly what "looking gay" means, but trust me, in all these years together, we've done plenty of acts, which are the very definition of being gay. Other examples are less obvious like being asked which of you is the "real" parent.


Sometimes these microaggressions are unintentional. For example, my mom recently received a box of old photos that had once belonged to her late uncle and aunt. Among them was a photo of Kelly, our then infant son, and me. We had included the photo in our Christmas card to my great aunt,

It's **NEVER** too late for family!




Consider older kid adoption because it changes lives.

718-372-3003
info@yougottabelieve.org
yougottabelieve.org



www.yougottabelieve.org

THE NEW SMART



City of Lakes
WALDORF
SCHOOL

Minneapolis, MN
Learn more at clws.org

www.clws.org



We teach students to think for themselves.

Waldorf students are creative, curious, confident, well-rounded people who make a difference in the world.

Committed to inclusivity, we welcome LGBTQ+ and gender-fluid families.



gmws.org

www.gmws.org

Mental Fortitude continued from page 49

who had written on the back of it, “Chris Katis and friend.” Now, personally, I don’t believe she was intentionally being homophobic or disrespectful to my relationship. Indeed, her own son was gay. I just think she was a 90-year-old woman using an outdated euphemism.

“Microaggressions absolutely can be unintentional,” Farr explains. “But they still can be harmful to the person receiving or hearing them!”

Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D., a professor of counseling psychology at Columbia University, and the person who conceptualized the idea of racial microaggressions, also argues that individuals can be on the receiving end of microinvalidations, microinsults, and microassaults. LGBTQ+ parents (and queer people in general) have likely experienced these forms of microaggressions multiple times.

Dr. Farr points out that referring to a same-gender spouse as your “friend” rather than as your husband or wife, is an example of microinvalidation. Hearing “you don’t look like a lesbian” or “you don’t act gay” are forms of microinsults or microassaults.

Nevertheless, these kinds of microaggression – intentional or not – can have a negative impact on the kids of LGBTQ+ parents. Dr. Farr says, “In this study, we found that

school-age children reporting feeling less close with their lesbian and gay parents when those parents had also reported experiencing more homonegative stigma in the last six months.”

She explains the experiences children with LGBTQ+ parents have with stigma and discrimination in terms of “pain and pathology.” As we all sadly know, these kids can be

“In this study, we found that school-age children reporting feeling less close with their lesbian and gay parents when those parents had also reported experiencing more homonegative stigma in the last six months.”

teased or bullied because of their families. They can also feel the harmful effects of the broader societal and cultural stigma their families face. However, in spite of all our kids’ outcomes and developmental stages don’t seem to be impacted.

“There is a vast literature demonstrating that children of LGBTQ+ parents do not differ from those with cisgender, heterosexual parents across a variety of outcomes and developmental stages,” Dr. Farr notes. “Overall, children across these family types develop similarly to one another, and rather, family processes – such as parenting practices and family relationships – appear to matter much more to children’s development than the actual structure of the family or their parents’ sexual and gender identities.”

That all means that whereas kids with queer parents



Celebrating THE 75 YEARS of COUNTRY SCHOOL Way

INCLUSIVE | INNOVATIVE | COLLABORATIVE

A thriving and diverse community serving Los Angeles students in the heart of Valley Village, CA.

Preschool - 8th Grade

(818) 769-2473
country-school.org



may at times experience the pain associated with stigma and discrimination, by and large, those experiences don't seem to translate to negative outcomes – the pathology she describes. In short, the kids will be alright.

But there's still work to do be done that will make life easier for queer parents. In a policy brief for the National Council on Family Relations, Dr. Farr and her coauthors, Charlotte Patterson, Ph.D., and Abbie Goldberg, Ph.D., suggested some important recommendations for policymakers such as:

- “The passage of federal and state legislation to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, education, parenting and other areas;
- “Eliminating religious exemptions in the law that allow discrimination against members of sexual and gender minorities;
- “Increase research funding to explore the full range of experiences among diverse LGBTQ+ parents and their children; and
- “Provide support for the development, evaluation, and dissemination

of effective programs to help LGBTQ+ parents and their children to thrive.”

All of these policy recommendations will go a long way in helping queer parents – and LGBTQ+ people in general – face less stigmatization and discrimination. However, we cannot dismiss how powerful the support we receive (and give!) can be. While I was writing this piece, my husband and I celebrated our 34th anniversary. Our social media lit up with the congratulations and well wishes of over 100 people – from every political bent, religious belief, and walk of life – from liberal atheist gay men to conservative Mormon grandmothers. That evening, my mom and sister treated us, my big brother, and our oldest son and his girlfriend to a celebratory dinner. For the record, our younger son was obviously also invited, but at 15-years-old, dinner with his parents is never his first choice.

I think it's important to celebrate these good times because we never know when life's next big challenge will surface. It's good to know people have your back; apparently, it makes you more resilient.

When the pandemic hit, no one had any idea just how detrimental to everyone it would be. I did put on a couple of pounds, thanks to my new (and abandoned) hobby of baking homemade sourdough bread. But because of the extra-long doggy walks, those gains weren't anywhere near the average 45 lbs. added by the dads in the APA study. In the end, Kelly and I managed it remarkably well. We had each other, a supportive network, and the unique experiences of heading a two-dad family to help us weather the storm. Who knew that being gay dads would come in so handy! ▼

Christopher Katis has spent his career in public relations and corporate communications. For the past 10 years he has penned the award-winning column Who's Your Daddy, which appears monthly in QSaltLake. He lives in Murray, Utah with his husband of 31 years, Kelly Huntington, and their teenage sons, Gus and Niko.

Photo courtesy of Christopher Katis
Illustration by Angeline Acain