



Rainbow families: The rewards

The rewards of raising a rainbow family are manifold. For some parents there is delight simply in the fact that they are able to have a family at all, having thought that being LGBTI would exclude them from the possibility of parenting.

Many parents enjoy the fact that they can create their own ways of doing things, and explore new and different approaches to parenting that are not influenced by traditional gender roles.

For lots of parents, being different is something to be celebrated and enjoyed. They recognise that diversity is good for their kids and good for society. They appreciate that they are contributing to the broader community's

understanding of, and respect for, different family structures and LGBTI people generally.

There is a sense that children raised in rainbow families are more open and accepting of difference and that they are very resilient. There is enormous joy and pride for parents in raising happy, healthy, thriving kids in the face of societal judgement and criticism.

Parents say ...

I think there's a huge pride in having such gorgeous kids and living and enjoying our life without any constraints. It's a very different situation than a lot of people live with, I think. It's positive being a rainbow family anywhere and I can't think of any negatives. **Claire**

We've had so much positive feedback about the kids – how well and how happy they are. They look healthy and they're really happy kids. We don't really know, because we've never raised kids before, but that's the feedback we get. **Anthony**

I think with the triplets we're going to have a tribe of children. I guess I'm comforted by a few research studies floating around that say kids with two mums do very well. That's pretty exciting. Having been through this year, too, it makes sense to me. David is so happy. If anything, becoming a family with children has really enriched our lives. **Michelle**

The biggest rewards

I knew I was gay from when I was about 12 and I thought I'd never be able to have a family. I always wanted to have children. I think being gay and being able to have children is just the best of both worlds, really: I am able to have a family, but I can still be who I am. **Peter**

There's been enormous joy about raising a family together. The huge support we've had has been one of the delights for us, sometimes from unexpected quarters. Being a parent is the thing that binds you to other parents and the fact that you are two women is really secondary – in our experience, anyway. **Julie**

The positives generally come from the community, particularly family and friends. There's a lot of acceptance. It is lovely to have a baby and will be lovely to have three more. The first year was a big learning curve, but it's a whole new area where my partner and I have had to work together. We just both love being mums. **Michelle**

The kids are all different. They've got their own personalities, their own strengths and differences. They are their own person and they are growing up to be positive in their own individual way. And it's not like it's any different because they've got same-sex parents. It's a positive experience and they are becoming the individuals they were meant to be. **Anthony**

I get to have the family and I gave up on when I came out. So, having a family – just being together and living the dream I gave up on because I thought I couldn't have it. **Eli**

Openness and diversity

Far and away the best thing is what it gives Frances in terms of the range of experiences there are in the world. She is different in lots of ways – she's got bright red hair and very thick glasses, so she has a number of things that set her apart from the average kid, but being in a rainbow family is something she is inherently very proud of. It's a really big part of her identity and she feels genuine pride. **Trudy**

The best part for me is introducing my child to a world that's full of diversity. **Alison**

I guess it's nice to be something really different and new, particularly for this area. I think that's what we are. As far as we know, we are the first rainbow family with two gay dads and it is nice when people are interested in a positive way. I think it helps everybody. It does help the community overall, although there might be some resistance and some fear. I think, eventually, it does change the community and I can't see how that's not a positive impact. **Anthony**

There is a certain openness and a necessity to talk to children very differently from the outset about life – how they came to be and who they are – and I think that's actually a real positive. **Pia**

Other rewards

I think the kids do a lot more thinking about what family means and what their family means to them. We've got quite a large donor family and we know lots of the siblings. Having that broadening our concept of family, and who is important to us, is an advantage. **Nicola**

The best thing is the difference. I love diversity and I love that we can add a bit of diversity to the school community and expose other people to it and hopefully produce a better generation that is more open to other sorts of family structures. It can be exhausting, but it is also rewarding when people say, 'Oh, you're the first rainbow family I've met'. **Patricia**

One of the best things is raising a resilient child from early on, because you are aware that they are going to have to cope with difference. I think our kids will be more resilient and I think some of the research shows that they are, because we've put such effort into preparing for all of that and being involved and addressing issues. **Mandy**

I think it really probably comes down to having two nurturers, and we've got a very equal balance in terms of the different things we do, but we're both very engaged with our kids. **Jenny**

We both love being mums and we've got a lovely little boy. Not to be smug, but I think, if anything, it feels like we are at an advantage, maybe because we are two women. We are very in sync. We really support each other and you can see the results of all our hard work: we've just got such a happy little boy. You walk in the room and his eyes light up. **Michelle**

The best thing is that we've just got a wonderful relationship. I think we're very compatible and I think life is great. We often have a little joke with Chris because he dates girls and he will actually come to us for advice. There's a standard line in our household, 'There's got to be some benefits to having two lesbian parents – like, we know how to pick up chicks!' **Jenny**

I've made some amazing friends out here in a suburb that's not where I grew up. I found my people here and I think part of that is because of how open I am. And I think part of why I am so open is because I want to rule out all the people who don't want to be my friend because I'm queer. My mum's a lesbian and I learnt to do that in high school. I remember saying that to her when I was sixteen, 'I just tell everyone, because if they've got a problem with it, then I know not to waste any more time'. **Bec**

I think, in some respects at least, we are much more of a partnership than I've seen with heterosexual couples – although it might be a twin/multiple thing as well, because multiple dads are either 100 per cent or not at all. **Ruth**

We had a boys' family and we'd do boy stuff, especially when he was a teenager. We were all on our bikes or we were out barbecuing. We'd go hiking and we would build stuff. It was just a bunch of blokes hanging out. I'm not particularly blokey, but it was nice. It was really easy and quite supportive because we were all on the same page. **Mark**



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