



Perfect Parents

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I'm at the Creating Change conference in Denver. A massive gathering of LGBT folks put on by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, it is something to behold. An entire hotel filled with every beautiful aspect of our community.

I've never been to one before and I must say, I'm a little overwhelmed.

I went to a session today on "Invisible Families," which talked about LGBT parenting and how we are identified in the community- or not. It was a six hour session and I'll be honest- I didn't stay for it all. But in one small group session, we talked about the changing nature of how we are seen in the community today.

One woman talked about her fears as a soon to be mom. The challenges that face her, her partner and their baby to be felt incredibly scary to her.

It is, I thought, but I didn't want to freak her out.

The irony is, most of what she needs to be afraid of isn't about being a lesbian and being a parent. No question there are hurdles and discrimination but when that sweet baby comes into the world, the obsession about when the last diaper was changed, how often they are nursing and please god, will there ever be sleep again takes over the angst about being different.

Until they are school age- then it comes back and rightfully so.

One point made, that hit home for me, was the concern that we are so afraid of being judged harshly simply because of who we are, we try to be perfect.

And there is no such thing as a perfect parent.

The pressure, though, is there. Some of it is self imposed but some of it comes from the community at large asking questions- do you have appropriate role models for your child? If you are two women, you must have a man in your life to help teach children manly things. If you are two men, well, how can any child possibly live without a mother?

Questions not often asked of heterosexual couples. Or single heterosexual parents, although I do think single dads deal with similar issues. I wonder if people who ask "do you know the father?" realize how incredibly insulting that is. Do they? Are they sure?

There is also an overriding fear of being too sexual. One woman quoted a couple in Canada who had a newborn, who swore they were in bed by 10:15pm every night and went straight to sleep.

As if that makes them OK to parent? I say get them a babysitter and remind them that without a healthy sex life, chances are they won't make it through the next 18 years.

And yet a Florida pastor urged his heterosexual congregation to have **sex every day for a month**. He believed sex was important to relationships. And that while "Jesus disapproved of pre-marital sex and promoted sex in marriage."

But since we're seen through the lens of sexuality, we have to go overboard to prove we are sexless. Only there to parent, nothing else. Because... well, I'm not really sure why.

Except that we all feel the pressure to fit in, to be okay in the communities eyes, and our community, when we become parents, changes drastically. We are thrust into school situations where we are the only ones. We want our kids to be accepted.

We want to be accepted. It's human nature.

So we tuck away parts of ourselves, and our struggles to look the right way.

I wanted to tell that young woman it would all work out. Get a strong group of other gay parents to have time with- some of it is for the kids but mostly? For you. So you have a place to say, I'm struggling. I'm scared. Where you don't have to be the role model for every gay person who ever had a child.

For goodness sakes, don't ever stop having sex. We didn't go through all this bullshit, discrimination and angst to give up an essential part of being human.

There are no perfect parents. Parents are, as a whole, are messy, make mistakes, wish back things we've done. It's the most terrifying and exhilarating experience you will ever have. You will feel joy and love in a way you never knew imaginable- unconditional and on a cellular level.

Try, please try, to let the world's judgment stop at your doorstep.

There are no perfect parents.