COURAGEOUS LOVE
COLLECTIVE
MAGAZINE

ISSUE THREE • OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2026



THE STATE OF GAY FATHERHOOD

WHO GETS TO DECIDE WE BELONG?

THE $200,000 QUESTION | YOUR CHILD'S FACE IS DATA | WHO HOLDS THE FATHER?

COURAGEOUS LOVE COLLECTIVE™ MAGAZINE

ISSUE THREE
OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2026

THE STATE OF GAY FATHERHOOD

LOVE. LAW. FAMILY. FUTURE.

Representation Should Feel Like Recognition.

Founded and edited by Tyson Pete
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

CourageousLoveCollective.com

COURAGEOUS LOVE COLLECTIVE™

FATHERHOOD | FAMILY | IDENTITY | HEALTH | ADVOCACY | COMMUNITY

At Courageous Love Collective Magazine, we amplify the lives, experiences, and leadership of gay and queer fathers, LGBTQ+ families, and the allies who support stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities.

Through compelling storytelling, cultural commentary, expert perspectives, and practical resources, we explore parenting, identity, relationships, mental health, family building, policy, faith, visibility, and legacy.

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Opinions

The views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, editor, or every member of the LGBTQIA+ community.



We Found the Heart Again

Some of you may have wondered what happened to the September issue of Courageous Love Collective Magazine.

The truth is, I took it back to the drawing board.

Not because the vision was gone. Not because the work stopped. And certainly not because the stories no longer mattered.

I went back because I realized this magazine needed to look, feel and speak more clearly to the purpose behind everything I have built.

My work has always centered gay fathers, queer families, healing, parenting, identity, relationships, visibility and the courage it takes to build a life with intention. When I looked at where the magazine was headed, I knew it was not enough to release another issue just to say we stayed on schedule.

The issue needed its heart back.

That required me to reconsider the voice, the stories, the visual direction and the responsibility this publication carries. I had to ask whether we were simply placing gay fathers on the page or truly creating a magazine that recognized the full weight of our lives.

Because representation is not only about being seen.

It is about being understood.

I am a gay father. I am a father of four and now a grandfather. I know what it means to love your children while healing parts of yourself they may never fully know. I were wounded. I know what it means to protect a family while navigating systems that were not designed with families like ours in mind.

I also know the pressure many fathers carry silently.

We are expected to provide, protect, lead, advocate and remain strong. Gay and queer fathers are often asked to do all of that while proving our families are healthy, respectable and worthy of the same recognition automatically granted to others.

But our families are not arguments.

Our children are not political talking points.

Our love is not a social experiment.

This issue asks a difficult question: ***Who gets to decide we belong?***

Inside our homes, that question has already been answered. It is answered when a child reaches for his father. It is answered during school mornings, bedtime stories, doctor's appointments, difficult conversations and ordinary Tuesday nights.

Fatherhood is not made real by public approval. It is made real through presence.

Still, what happens outside our homes matters. Court decisions matter. Elections matter. School policies matter. Employer benefits matter. Technology matters. Mental health matters. The cost of building and protecting a family matters.

That is why this issue goes beyond celebration.

We examine the legal decisions that could affect LGBTQ+ families. We confront the price of surrogacy, adoption and assisted reproduction. We investigate what artificial intelligence, deepfakes and data collection mean for our children. We talk honestly about fatherhood, masculinity, loneliness, faith, relationships and the emotional cost of always appearing strong.

But we will not leave our readers in fear.

Every difficult story in this issue moves toward action. Every question leads to a resource, a conversation or a practical next step. I want you to leave these pages more informed, more prepared and more confident in the family you are building.

Courageous Love Collective is not here to ask permission.

We are here to tell the truth.

We are here to create the language many of us were never given. We are here to challenge the wounds we inherited, protect the children entrusted to us and build something stronger than what came before.

This is not simply an issue about the state of gay fatherhood. It is about the future of family.

And if there was never a lane designed for us, then we will continue building one—with intention, responsbility, healing and courageous love.

With love and purpose,

Tyson Pete

Tyson Pete
Founder and Editor-in-Chief
Courageous Love Collective Magazine

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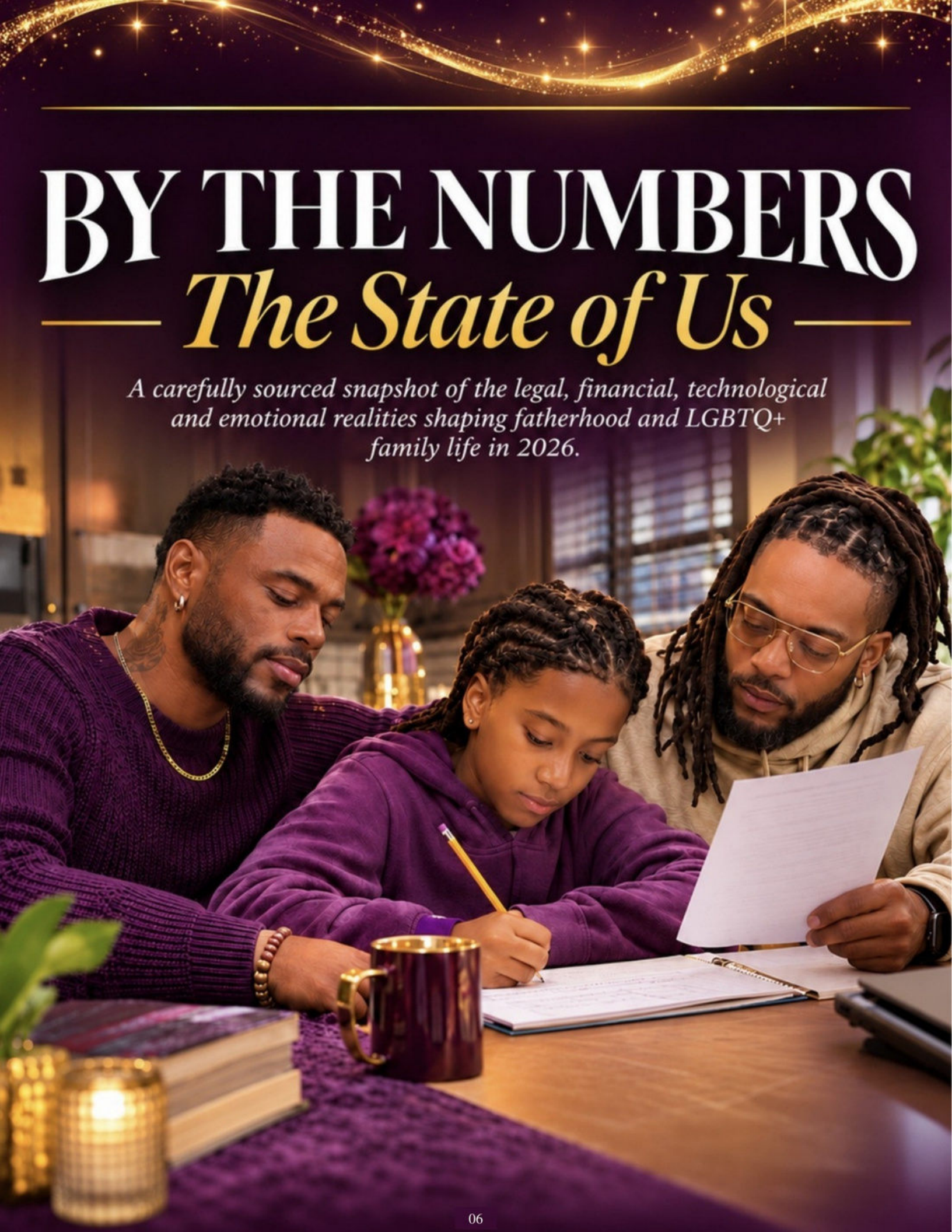
BY THE NUMBERS

The State of Us

A carefully sourced snapshot of the legal, financial, technological and emotional realities shaping fatherhood and LGBTQ+ family life in 2026.

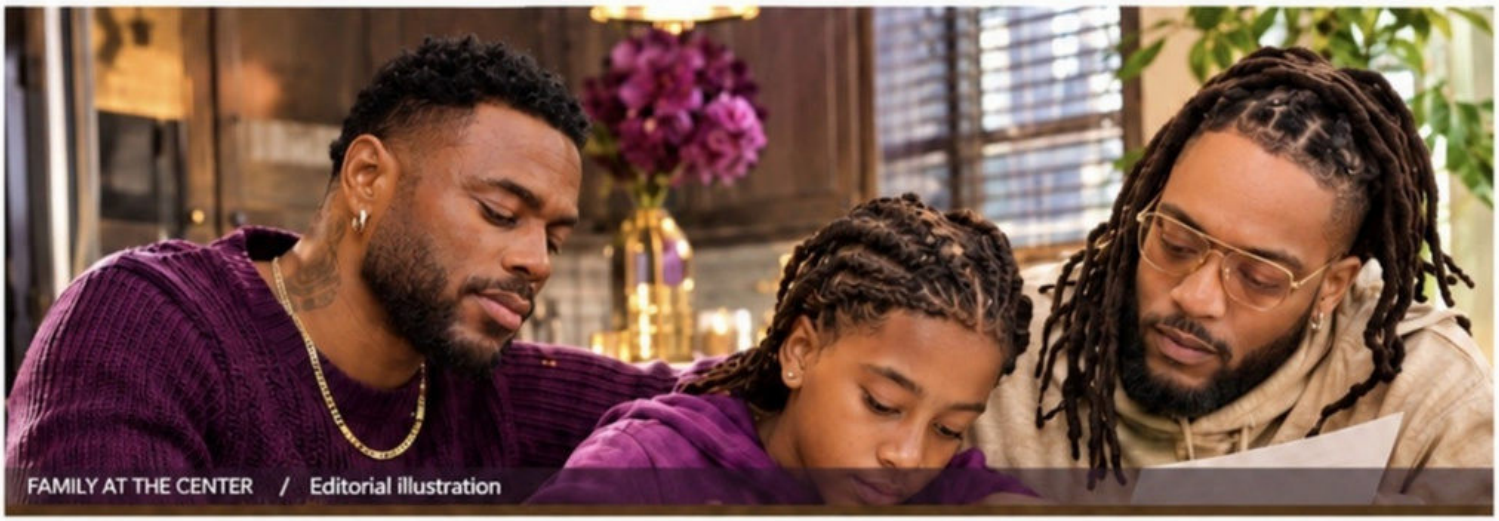


RESEARCH FEATURE • U.S. FAMILY LIFE IN 2026

The State of Us

BY THE NUMBERS

The legal, financial, technological and emotional realities shaping LGBTQ+ families—and the fathers raising the next generation.



FAMILY AT THE CENTER / Editorial illustration

2.57M
LGBTQ ADULTS PARENTING MINORS

167K
SAME-SEX COUPLES PARENTING MINORS

$13,184
AVERAGE ANNUAL CHILD CARE (2025)

Fatherhood is often measured in small moments: a child finishing homework, a parent completing a school form, a late-night conversation after everyone else has gone to bed. But behind those ordinary moments are systems that determine whether families can afford care, secure legal recognition, and protect their children.

For gay and queer fathers, those systems are not abstract. They shape the time, money and emotional energy available for parenting. The latest research does not describe one universal LGBTQ+ experience; it offers a set of windows into lives too often overlooked. Here is what the numbers actually tell us—and what they do not.

01 A COMMUNITY THAT IS ALREADY RAISING CHILDREN

2.57 million. That is the estimated number of LGBTQ adults raising children under 18 in their homes, according to the Williams Institute's 2024 national analysis. Researchers also estimated that 167,000 same-sex couples were raising minors. These are study estimates, not a 2026 census or a count of gay fathers alone.

The same analysis found that 21% of same-sex couples raising minors had adopted, compared with 3% of different-sex couples raising minors. Same-sex parents are not a novelty or a single kind of family. They are biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, stepparents and caregivers.

02 RECOGNITION IS NOT ONE DOCUMENT

Marriage equality does not erase every gap in parentage law. A birth certificate, marriage certificate and court order can serve different legal purposes. The Movement Advancement Project's state-law map, updated November 10, 2026, reports that only 37% of LGBTQ adults live in states granting functional parents full legal parentage. Another 22% live in states that grant functional parents standing to seek custody. These categories describe one route to parental recognition; they are not a count of all legally recognized LGBTQ parents.

The legal stakes are current. On November 3, 2026, the Supreme Court heard arguments in *St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy*, involving whether Colorado may require publicly funded religious preschools to offer equal enrollment opportunities to LGBTQ families. The dispute raises competing claims about religious freedom and nondiscrimination. No final ruling had been issued as of November 10.

THE STATE OF US

64%
OF U.S. TEENS HAVE USED AN AI CHATBOT

48% **OF PARENTS REPORT OVERWHELMING STRESS MOST DAYS**

Figures come from separate surveys and years.



03 THE PRICE OF BUILDING—AND RAISING—A FAMILY

Child Care Aware of America put the 2025 national average annual price of child care at $13,184, equal to about 10% of median income for a married-couple household with children and 33% for a single-parent household. Those figures concern families across the country, not only LGBTQ parents.

Routes into parenthood have sharply different costs. AdoptUSKids says adoption from foster care generally costs little or nothing; other adoption routes may bring agency, attorney and travel fees. A 2024 American Bar Association overview cited $125,000–$175,000 as a typical surrogacy range. Costs vary with medical care, location, insurance, donor arrangements, attorneys and whether multiple attempts are needed.

04 OUR CHILDREN ARE LIVING WITH AI

Pew Research Center reported in December 2025 that 64% of U.S. teens ages 13–17 had used an AI chatbot. In a February 2026 report, 54% said they had used chatbots for schoolwork and 12% for emotional support or advice. These are national teen findings, not estimates for children in LGBTQ households.

For parents, the lesson extends beyond screen time. A class photo can travel far beyond its intended audience. Voice clones, generated images and persuasive chatbots introduce new questions about consent, identity and trust. Ask schools what they upload, review privacy settings together, and teach children not to send identifying information or intimate images to unfamiliar platforms.

05 THE PRESSURE BEHIND THE STRONG-PARENT IMAGE

The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory, drawing on 2023 survey data, found that 48% of parents said their stress was completely overwhelming on most days, compared with 26% of other adults. This is a national parenting measure—not a diagnosis or an LGBTQ-specific statistic. Yet it underlines how easily the work of caring can become isolating.

In a Williams Institute study published June 2026, 52% of 108 surveyed transgender and nonhinary parents described the hostile anti-LGBTQ climate as a barrier to future parenting. and 59% expressed concern about the legal validity of their parenting rights. Because this was a small community sample, its percentages should not be generalized to all trans parents. The concerns deserve attention without inflating what the sample proves.

06 WHAT FAMILIES CAN DO NOW

Protect parentage. Have a qualified family-law attorney review whether your household needs an adoption, parentage judgment, guardianship plan or updated estate documents. The answer depends on state law and family circumstances.

Audit the household budget. Compare child-care options, employer fertility or adoption benefits, family leave, dependent-care accounts and public assistance for which you may qualify. Request itemized quotes before signing a family-building contract.

Build a digital safety routine. Know which apps your child uses, how photos are stored, who can access school platforms, and how to report impersonation or harmful content. Practice consent before posting a child's image—even when the post seems harmless.

Make space for fathers, too. Schedule honest check-ins with a partner, friend or trusted professional. Exhaustion does not cancel the responsibility of parenting, but pretending it does not exist can make that work harder.

Stay engaged locally, School boards, health systems, courts and employers can shape a family's daily life just as directly as national politics. Ask questions, document decisions and learn your rights before a crisis.

The bottom line: LGBTQ+ families cannot be reduced to percentages. Yet careful evidence can expose uneven laws, expensive pathways and overlooked emotional needs. The numbers do not decide whether we belong. They help us see what must change so every family has the chance to thrive.

REPORTING SOURCES / DATA YEARS AND POPULATIONS VARY

UCLA Williams Institute (2024), LGBTQ Parenting in the US
Movement Advancement Project (Nov. 10, 2026), Parental Recognition Laws
Colorado Public Radio (Nov. 3, 2026), St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy hearing
Child Care Aware of America (2026), Child Care in America: 2025 Price & Supply
AdoptUSKids, What Does It Cost?
American Bar Association (2024), Creating Families: Surrogacy
Pew Research Center (Dec. 2025; Feb. 2026), Teens and AI
U.S. Surgeon General (2024), Parents Under Pressure
UCLA Williams Institute (June 2026), Challenges for Transgender Parents

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COMMUNITY LIVES HERE



BLACK LGBTQ+ WELLNESS

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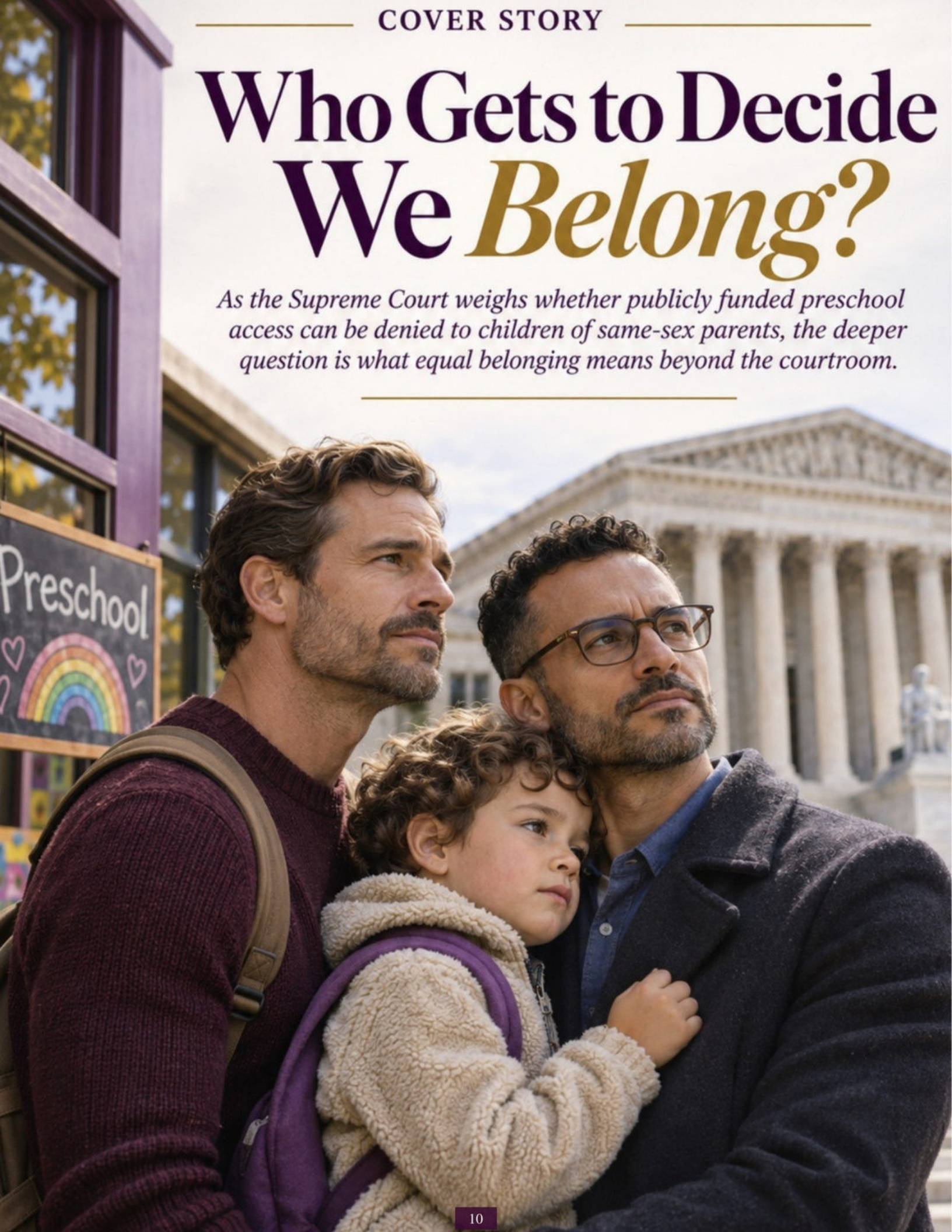
Who Gets to Decide We *Belong?*

As the Supreme Court weighs whether publicly funded preschool access can be denied to children of same-sex parents, the deeper question is what equal belonging means beyond the courtroom.



Who Gets to Decide We *Belong?*

One week after oral arguments in St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy, the Supreme Court is weighing whether Colorado can deny taxpayer-funded preschool dollars to providers that refuse to enroll children of same-sex parents. The legal fight begins with preschool access, but the deeper question is what equal belonging means when public money, religious liberty, and family dignity collide.

By Courageous Love Collective Magazine



For families who have spent years fighting to be recognized, belonging is never an abstract idea. It lives in enrollment forms, parent handbooks, school events, and the quiet calculations families make about where their children will be safe, welcomed, and seen.

That is why *St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy* matters far beyond one Colorado preschool program. The case asks whether a religious preschool that wants to participate in a taxpayer-funded public benefit may still refuse to enroll children of same-sex parents under its own faith-based admissions rules. Colorado says no: if a provider accepts public preschool dollars, it must offer families an equal opportunity to enroll. The Catholic schools challenging that rule say the state is burdening religion by forcing them to choose between public funding and their beliefs.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments on November 3, 2026. As of today, November 10, 2026, no decision has been issued. But the questions raised in court are already bigger than preschool. They reach into the future of religious-liberty law, nondiscrimination policy, public education funding, and the everyday dignity of LGBTQ+ families.

At stake is not only whether parents can access one more preschool seat. At stake is whether the public can be asked to finance exclusion and still call it equal opportunity.

> *“Belonging is not a slogan. In school, it becomes real or unreal at the front door.”*

CASE AT A GLANCE

Case: St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy (No. 25-581)

Argued: November 3, 2026

Status: Decision pending as of November 10, 2026

Core issue: Can Colorado exclude private religious preschools from its universal preschool program if those schools refuse equal enrollment access to children of same-sex parents?

Why it matters: The answer could reshape how states balance religious liberty, nondiscrimination rules, and equal access for LGBTQ+ families.

What the Court Is Actually *Deciding*

At the center of *St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy* is a simple but far-reaching question: if a state opens a taxpayer-funded preschool program to private providers, may it require every participating provider to give families an equal opportunity to enroll? Colorado says yes. The Catholic preschools challenging the rule say that answer burdens their religious exercise.

Colorado's universal preschool program was designed to expand early-childhood access by helping families use public support at participating providers, including private ones. But participation comes with conditions. One of them is an equal-opportunity rule: providers that accept public preschool dollars may not deny families enrollment access because of protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender identity.



The schools challenging the program do not argue that Colorado must fund religion in the abstract. They argue that once the state decides to include religious providers in a public benefit, it cannot exclude them simply because their admissions practices follow church teaching on marriage, sex, and family life. Colorado answers that it is not policing belief. It is policing participation in a publicly funded program.

That distinction matters. The state says the schools remain free to teach Catholic doctrine, pray with students, and organize school life around faith. What they may not do—if they want public money—is screen out families who do not satisfy the school's religious expectations.

What Oral Arguments Suggested

The Supreme Court heard arguments on November 3, 2026, and the questioning suggested real skepticism from several conservative justices toward Colorado's position. Some justices pressed the state on whether its equal-opportunity rule is truly neutral and generally applicable if the program makes room for other kinds of distinctions, including supports directed at low-income children or children with disabilities.

Colorado's lawyers argued that those categories are not comparable exceptions to discrimination, but targeted efforts to remove barriers that directly affect preschool access. They maintained that the state's core interest is not in abstract ideology but in ensuring that publicly funded preschool seats are genuinely open to families who qualify.

The challengers framed the issue differently. In their view, Colorado is demanding that religious schools abandon faith-based admissions principles as the price of participation. They argue that the Constitution does not permit the state to force religious providers to choose between their beliefs and access to a public benefit.

> *"The legal question sounds technical. The human question is not: can a child be shut out while public money still calls the system fair?"*

Case posture today

Argued Nov. 3, 2026. As of Nov. 10, 2026, the Court has not issued a decision.



Belonging Beyond the *Courtroom*

The case matters because belonging is built long before a ruling is announced. It begins in the places where children learn who is welcome and who is merely tolerated. A preschool handbook, an admissions interview, a school celebration, a family bulletin board—these are not legal abstractions. They are how institutions teach children what family means.

For LGBTQ+ parents, that is why this case reaches beyond constitutional doctrine. If a school may receive public funding while excluding children of same-sex parents, the message to families is not confined to one building or one city. It signals that exclusion can still be wrapped in legitimacy, so long as it is described as religious conviction rather than discrimination.

Supporters of the preschools see something different. They argue that pluralism means allowing religious institutions to remain religious, even when they participate in public programs. From that view, forcing a faith-based school to accept every family on equal terms would erase meaningful distinctions between secular and religious education.

Both perspectives claim the language of fairness. But they begin from very different understandings of what public participation requires. One side says equal opportunity means public money should not subsidize exclusion. The other says equal opportunity means religious providers should not be disqualified from benefits because their beliefs shape their practices.

What Is Really at Stake

The stakes are practical as much as symbolic. For some families, universal preschool support can determine whether a child attends a preferred school at all. For states, the case could influence how future programs are designed—not only in preschool, but in other publicly funded services that involve private religious partners.

A ruling for the schools could make it harder for states to insist on uniform nondiscrimination rules when they fund private providers. A ruling for Colorado could reaffirm that accepting public dollars comes with public obligations. Either way, the decision may shape how lawmakers write program rules, how families evaluate school choices, and how courts weigh equality against religious liberty in the years ahead.

Four questions families are asking

- Will public money be allowed to support exclusion?
- Could this affect other school choice or childcare programs?
- What does equal opportunity mean in practice?
- How will children understand who belongs?

> *“Belonging is not fully tested when a family enters a courtroom. It is tested when a family approaches a school.”*

Conclusion

What Happens *Next*



As of November 10, 2026, the Supreme Court has not issued its opinion. When it does, the immediate legal answer may be narrower than the public meaning attached to it. The justices could focus closely on the structure of Colorado's program, the presence or absence of comparable exceptions, and how prior free-exercise cases apply. But however technical the reasoning sounds, the practical result will travel widely.

If the Court sides with the schools, states may face pressure to weaken or redesign nondiscrimination conditions in publicly funded programs involving private providers. If the Court sides with Colorado, religious institutions may still participate in public life—but they may be told more clearly that taxpayer-funded participation carries obligations to the public they are serving.

> *"Equal belonging is not proven by rhetoric. It is proven by whether families can approach publicly funded institutions without being told that their place is conditional."*

What Families Can Do While the Law Catches Up

Families do not have to wait for a decision to think strategically. They can ask prospective schools clear questions about enrollment policies, classroom culture, family engagement, and how the school defines safety and respect. They can document communications, review handbooks carefully, and learn whether local or state civil-rights protections apply.

They can also widen the conversation. This case is about preschool, but the larger work is cultural as much as legal. Communities decide belonging not only through court decisions, but through board policies, enrollment practices, sermons, PTA meetings, and the ordinary language adults use in front of children.

A practical checklist

- ☐ Ask for the school's written admissions policy.
- ☐ Review family handbooks before enrolling.
- ☐ Learn your state's nondiscrimination protections.
- ☐ Keep records of denials or exclusionary statements.
- ☐ Find affirming parent and legal-support networks.

The Last *Word*

The deepest question in this case is not whether disagreement exists. It does. The deepest question is who bears the cost of that disagreement. Too often, children and families are asked to carry that burden in silence.

Equal belonging is not proven by rhetoric. It is proven by whether families can approach publicly funded institutions without being told, directly or indirectly, that their place is conditional. The Court will decide the legal dispute. The country will still have to decide what kind of welcome it is willing to call just.

Reporting note: *Updated Nov. 10, 2026. Reporting informed by the Supreme Court docket, questions presented, oral-argument materials, and official Colorado universal preschool program information.*

Family Equality

The National Nonprofit for LGBTQ+ Families



Every LGBTQ+ Family Deserves to *Flourish.*

Family Equality is the only national organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the freedoms of all LGBTQ+ families through bold advocacy, powerful community building, and transformative education. Since 1979, Family Equality has helped ensure that everyone has the freedom to find, form, and sustain their families.

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Protecting family rights and freedoms.

CONNECT
Building community through events and support.

EDUCATE
Sharing trusted resources for every stage of family life.

20K+
families on our email list

1,500+
people attended Family Week in 2026

86%
of bills we opposed in 2025 failed

60%
of the bills we supported in 2025 were enacted

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POLITICS & CURRENT AFFAIRS • SPECIAL REPORT

Your Family Is *on the Ballot*

From local ballot measures to key community decisions, this election will shape LGBTQ+ families, schools, and healthcare.

BY TYSON PETE • UPDATED NOVEMBER 11, 2026

The Politics of an Ordinary Tuesday

Your family does not stop being a family when an election ends. But the decisions made during that election can change how your family is recognized, protected, educated, and supported.

Think about an ordinary Tuesday morning. A father wakes his children, prepares breakfast, checks homework, and makes sure everyone gets where they need to be. Somewhere between packing lunches and leaving for work, he receives a message from his child's school. Perhaps there is a new policy concerning student privacy, a proposed change to the curriculum, or a decision about which families are represented in classroom materials.

Across town, another parent is reviewing healthcare coverage. A couple is considering adoption. A transgender teenager is preparing for athletic tryouts. Two fathers are completing emergency-contact forms and wondering whether both will be recognized if their child needs medical attention.

None of these moments necessarily feels political. Yet public policy influences every one of them.

The November 3, 2026 midterm elections determined far more than who would occupy seats in Congress. Voters also considered measures involving marriage equality, constitutional protections, reproductive healthcare, transgender students, education funding, and the authority of parents and schools.

Those decisions were not uniform. In some states, voters approved expanded constitutional protections. In others, they supported restrictions on certain healthcare procedures or school sports participation. Elsewhere, voters rejected proposals that would have changed access to student records and parental notifications.

The results offer a complicated picture of American public opinion. They also demonstrate why families cannot fully understand an election by looking at party victories and defeats alone.

A candidate may win an election while voters in the same state approve a policy that candidate opposed. A state may protect one civil right while restricting another. A community may publicly embrace family values while disagreeing sharply over what those values require of schools, healthcare providers, and government agencies.

For gay and queer fathers, understanding these distinctions is essential. This is not an argument that every LGBTQ+ family must share the same political views. Nor is it an endorsement of any political party or candidate. It is an examination of how government decisions affect family life—and why informed participation matters long after the ballots have been counted.

1. Marriage Equality: What Virginia's Vote Actually Changed

One of the most consequential family-related decisions on November 3 came from Virginia. Voters approved Question 2, a constitutional amendment removing the state's existing prohibition on same-sex marriage and replacing it with language protecting marriage between two adults regardless of sex, gender, or race. The preliminary results showed approximately 57% support.

To understand why this matters, it is necessary to examine the difference between a right recognized nationally and a restriction still written into a state's constitution.

In 2015, the United States Supreme Court decided *Obergefell v. Hodges*, recognizing the constitutional

right of same-sex couples to marry. That ruling rendered conflicting state prohibitions unenforceable. However, some states retained older prohibitions in their constitutional text, even though those restrictions could not legally be enforced under the Supreme Court's ruling. Virginia was one of them.

Its 2026 amendment addressed that contradiction directly. According to the Virginia Department of Elections, approval removes the former constitutional prohibition and affirms equal treatment for lawful marriages between two adults. The amendment is scheduled to become effective January 1, 2027.

For same-sex couples, marriage recognition is connected to significant practical protections. Depending on applicable law and individual circumstances, marital status can influence inheritance, taxation, spousal benefits, medical decision-making, health insurance, and financial arrangements. For married fathers, those questions become especially important when children are involved.

However, a critical distinction must remain clear: **Marriage equality does not automatically resolve every issue of legal parentage.**

Marriage, biological parentage, adoption, birth certificates, and court-established parentage can involve different legal rules. A person may be legally married yet still need to determine whether additional documentation would strengthen or clarify parental recognition, particularly when family-building arrangements cross state or international borders.

The responsible approach is not to assume that a marriage certificate answers every family-law question. It is to understand the documents that establish each parent's legal rights. Virginia's amendment represents a specific change to the state's constitutional framework. It does not, by itself, determine every legal question affecting gay fathers nationwide.

That distinction between symbolic recognition and practical legal protection is one families should continue examining.

2. Equal Protection: Vermont's Broader Constitutional Decision

Virginia was not alone in addressing constitutional protections. Vermont voters approved Proposal 4, an amendment establishing explicit equal-protection language covering multiple personal characteristics.

The amendment prohibits the state from denying equal treatment under the law based on race, ethnicity, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or national origin. Preliminary returns showed approximately 79% support.

The measure is significant because it places specific equality principles directly into the state constitution. Supporters argued that explicit constitutional language provides more durable protection against future changes in government policy and helps clarify the state's obligations.

Critics questioned whether the amendment was necessary given existing protections and raised concerns about how its language could be interpreted in future legal disputes. Both arguments involved questions about the appropriate role and scope of constitutional protections.

For families, the practical issue is how those protections operate when government agencies make decisions. An equality provision may influence litigation and the legal analysis of policies involving public services, education, or other state actions.

But constitutional language does not guarantee that discrimination will disappear or that every disagreement will produce a particular outcome in court. Its application depends on future legal

interpretations and the circumstances of individual cases.

The broader lesson is that state constitutions matter. Federal law establishes important nationwide protections, but states also maintain legal systems that can provide additional safeguards. Parents should know which protections exist where they live, what those protections cover, and how they can be enforced.

A right written into law is important. Knowing how to exercise it is equally important.

3. When School Sports Become a Statewide Political Question

School athletics became another major focus of the 2026 elections. Voters in Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska, and Washington approved measures establishing or expanding sex-based restrictions on participation in certain school sports.

The measures were not identical. Some addressed public-school athletics. Others extended to college sports, prescribed team classifications, or created documentation requirements.

Colorado's Proposition 134, for example, requires school-based sports teams to be designated according to specified sex categories or as mixed teams, with participation governed by the measure's eligibility rules. Washington's Initiative 638 established restrictions on participation in female-designated school sports and introduced healthcare-provider documentation requirements. Nebraska voters approved Initiative Measure 442, adding sex-based school sports eligibility provisions to the state constitution.

The arguments surrounding these measures reflect a continuing national disagreement. Supporters of sex-based restrictions generally maintain that eligibility rules are necessary to preserve fairness, competitive opportunities, and safety in girls' and women's sports.

Opponents argue that categorical restrictions exclude transgender students from meaningful participation, create privacy concerns, and may undermine students' educational and social wellbeing.

These competing concerns cannot be resolved simply by reducing the debate to slogans. Athletic eligibility rules involve questions about fairness, inclusion, developmental differences, privacy, medical information, and the responsibilities of schools.

For parents, the immediate questions are practical. Which children are subject to the policy? Which schools must follow it? What documentation is required? Are there exemptions? What appeal procedures exist? When does the rule take effect?

Those details matter because legal requirements can vary substantially across states and athletic organizations. And election approval does not necessarily end the legal debate.

For example, Washington's Initiative 638 faced a legal challenge shortly after the election, placing its implementation and privacy provisions under additional scrutiny.

Families should therefore distinguish among three separate developments: a measure being approved by voters, its scheduled effective date, and any subsequent court action affecting enforcement.

A child preparing for an athletic season needs accurate information about the rules that actually apply—not assumptions based solely on a headline.

4. Parents' Rights and Student Privacy: The Washington Example

Few areas of public policy generate stronger emotions than the question of what parents should know about their children's experiences at school. Washington's 2026 election offered a direct example of that debate.

Voters rejected Initiative 001, which would have restored an earlier version of the state's parental-rights law after changes made by lawmakers in 2025. The rejected measure would have expanded or restored certain parental notification and records-access provisions, including requirements involving school-based medical services and counseling-related information. It would also have changed some procedures and deadlines for accessing records.

Supporters argued that parents have a fundamental responsibility to understand what happens in their children's educational and healthcare environments. They maintained that schools should not withhold important information from parents responsible for their children's wellbeing.

Opponents raised concerns about student confidentiality, particularly in circumstances involving sensitive healthcare, family conflict, abuse, or a child's disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity. They argued that some students might avoid seeking help if confidential information could be disclosed in ways that compromised their safety.

The proposal's rejection left the Legislature's more recent amendments in place. But the underlying disagreement remains relevant far beyond Washington.

How should schools balance parental responsibility with a child's developing privacy rights and need for protection?

There is no responsible answer that ignores either concern. Parents ordinarily need meaningful access to academic information, attendance records, educational planning, and important school decisions. Children also have legitimate interests in safety, dignity, confidentiality, and access to appropriate support.

Federal law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, establishes important rules for access to education records. Additional state laws can address student healthcare, counseling, confidentiality, and parental notifications. These protections are not identical in every jurisdiction.

A parent should therefore distinguish between education records, medical records, confidential counseling information, and information that schools are legally required to report.

A broadly worded political statement about parental rights does not answer every legal question. Neither does a general promise of student privacy. The details must be examined.

For gay fathers and LGBTQ+ families, the goal should be an educational environment in which parents can fulfill their responsibilities while children receive appropriate protections and support. That requires transparency about the rules, thoughtful communication, and an understanding of the law rather than assumptions about what schools may or may not disclose.

5. Healthcare Access: The Stakes Behind the Ballot Language

Healthcare decisions were another major feature of the November election. Voters in Idaho, Missouri, Nevada, and Virginia considered measures involving reproductive rights. Some proposals also included provisions affecting transgender healthcare.

The results demonstrated how differently states approached these issues. In Virginia, voters approved Question 1, establishing state constitutional protections involving reproductive healthcare decisions. In Nevada, voters approved Question 6, concerning constitutional protection for abortion rights. Idaho voters rejected Proposition 1, which

would have established certain statutory reproductive-health protections.

Missouri voters rejected Amendment 3, a proposal that would have repealed the constitutional reproductive-freedom protections voters approved in 2024 and imposed additional restrictions, including provisions concerning certain medical treatments for transgender minors.

The rejection of Missouri's amendment did not create an entirely new legal system. It prevented the proposed changes from taking effect and preserved the existing constitutional framework.

That distinction is essential when reporting election results. A defeated ballot measure does not necessarily mean that every restriction in the state has been eliminated. Similarly, approval of a new constitutional protection does not immediately settle every question of medical availability, insurance coverage, provider participation, or access.

Healthcare policy operates through multiple layers. State law determines what services may legally be provided. Federal requirements may also apply. Insurers determine coverage according to applicable laws and policy terms. Healthcare systems decide which services they offer, and individual providers make decisions subject to professional standards and legal obligations.

For LGBTQ+ parents, healthcare policy is relevant across numerous situations. Family-building plans may involve fertility treatment, pregnancy care, assisted reproduction, surrogacy arrangements, or other medical services.

Families may need pediatric healthcare, counseling, disability-related support, or treatment for a child with specialized needs. Transgender parents or children may face additional legal questions about care availability and eligibility.

The correct response to a changing healthcare landscape is to identify the exact policy and its effective date. A proposed rule, a ballot initiative, an enacted statute, and a final court order do not carry the same legal authority.

Families should seek guidance from qualified professionals who understand their state's requirements, rather than relying on political advertisements or social-media interpretations.

Healthcare decisions deserve accurate information, careful planning, and respect for the people whose lives are affected.

6. The School Board: Where National Debates Become Local Decisions

National elections receive most of the attention. Yet many decisions shaping a child's ordinary school day are made far closer to home.

Local school boards may oversee district budgets, adopt policies, approve educational priorities, hire or evaluate superintendents, and make decisions about school facilities and programs. Their precise authority depends on state and district law.

The policies they establish can influence how schools address bullying, curriculum materials, parental participation, student privacy, school climate, technology, and access to educational services.

For parents, that means a school board meeting may have more immediate consequences than a nationally televised political debate.

Consider a district discussing its anti-bullying policy. The question is not simply whether board members oppose bullying. Most people do. The important questions concern how bullying is defined, how

incidents are documented, what protections exist, and how schools respond when a child reports harassment.

Does the district have a written reporting process? Are staff members trained to recognize harassment involving sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, religion, or family structure? What happens when a complaint is filed? How are parents informed? Is there an appeal process if a family believes the response was inadequate?

The same attention to detail should apply when schools debate library materials or classroom content. Parents may disagree about what is age-appropriate or how particular subjects should be taught.

Those disagreements deserve examination without assuming that everyone who questions a book supports discrimination, or that every restriction is automatically justified.

A responsible evaluation asks who is making the decision, what criteria are being used, whether qualified educators are involved, and whether policies are applied consistently.

For gay fathers, another consideration is whether schools recognize the diversity of family structures represented by their students. School forms, emergency contacts, classroom activities, and family communication should accurately recognize each child's legally authorized caregivers.

These details may appear small. But for a child, they can determine whether school feels welcoming, confusing, or unnecessarily exclusionary.

7. Follow the Money: School Bonds, Property Taxes, and Public Priorities

Not every important education measure contains words such as equality, family, or parental rights. Some involve financing.

In 2026, voters across the country considered school bonds, taxes, and other proposals that could influence educational infrastructure and services. In California, for example, voters in the Bellflower Unified School District approved Measure SM, authorizing $135 million in bonds for school facility improvements.

The measure addressed projects such as roofs, plumbing, heating and ventilation systems, classroom facilities, and accessibility improvements for students with disabilities. The borrowing is supported by an estimated property-tax levy of $49 per $100,000 of assessed value.

This is a useful example because the issue reaches well beyond political identity. A school with deteriorating facilities affects students regardless of their parents' sexual orientation. A classroom without appropriate heating or cooling presents practical concerns. Inaccessible buildings affect students with disabilities. Outdated facilities may limit educational opportunities.

At the same time, public borrowing has a cost. Property owners may pay additional taxes over many years, and residents deserve to know how borrowed funds will be managed.

A nonpartisan evaluation should therefore examine both the proposed benefits and the financial obligations. Families should ask whether a bond funds new construction, repairs, accessibility improvements, or ongoing services.

They should examine the estimated repayment cost, oversight requirements, audits, and projected timelines. They should also distinguish capital funding from operating budgets.

In California, school general-obligation bond proceeds generally finance eligible facilities and improvements rather than ordinary teacher salaries or routine operating expenses. That distinction often gets lost in campaign messaging.

It is possible to support stronger school facilities while questioning a financing proposal's cost or structure. It is also possible to oppose a particular bond without opposing public education.

What matters is understanding what the proposal actually authorizes. For LGBTQ+ families, education funding should be evaluated through the same practical questions relevant to every household: Does this improve educational access, student safety, school quality, and the responsible use of public money?

8. Why Local Government Deserves More Attention

Schools are only one part of the equation. County supervisors, city councils, public-health agencies, housing authorities, and other local bodies influence circumstances that can strengthen or destabilize families.

Consider housing. A city considering zoning changes may affect whether additional housing can be built, where development occurs, or how much housing may cost over time.

A county considering its health budget may influence clinics, outreach programs, or community services. A local government reviewing transportation priorities may affect how families reach schools, employment, medical appointments, and childcare.

These issues can become LGBTQ+ family issues without being labeled as such. A single father working multiple jobs may struggle with transportation and childcare. Two fathers raising children may need affordable housing close to schools.

A queer parent caring for a child with a disability may depend on reliable public-health and accessibility services. An older LGBTQ+ adult helping raise grandchildren may rely on community services or local assistance.

Public decisions do not affect every household identically. Family income, disability, geography, race, employment, and access to transportation can all influence how policies are experienced.

That is why voters should examine the practical impact of proposed measures rather than relying solely on the political language surrounding them.

When a measure promises public safety, ask how safety will be improved. When it promises education reform, ask which outcomes will change. When it promises tax relief, ask whether services will be reduced and which households will benefit. When it promises expanded services, ask how those services will be funded and evaluated.

These questions apply regardless of which political party supports the proposal.

9. The Difference Between a Campaign Promise and an Enforceable Policy

Election campaigns are designed to persuade. Campaign materials often simplify complex policies into memorable statements.

Candidates may promise to protect parents, strengthen public education, reduce healthcare costs, or defend constitutional rights. Such promises can reveal priorities, but they are not substitutes for policy details.

A campaign statement is not legislation. Legislation is not always immediately enforceable. A ballot measure's approval does not necessarily mean every provision takes effect the following morning. A court challenge can create additional uncertainty.

Consider the difference between four stages of policy development. A candidate announces an intention to pursue a particular education policy. After an election, legislation is introduced. The legislation is approved and signed into law. Its implementation is then shaped

by regulations, agency procedures, effective dates, or litigation.

Each stage matters. But each is different. Parents who want to understand what is actually changing should look for official documents, not just headlines.

For legislation, read the enacted text and effective date. For a ballot measure, review the official voter guide, fiscal analysis, and election results. For a school policy, request the adopted board policy and any administrative procedures.

For healthcare coverage, obtain the insurer's current policy or written explanation. For a legal dispute, distinguish between arguments made in court and orders that have actually been issued.

Informed families ask not only what officials promised, but what the law now requires.

10. The Seven-Question Family Policy Test

Before supporting, opposing, or drawing conclusions about a ballot measure or local government decision, families can use one straightforward framework.

1. **What does the measure actually change?** Identify the existing law and the proposed amendment. Do not assume that a measure creates a completely new policy.
2. **Who is directly affected?** Determine whether the proposal applies to every resident, public-school students, private institutions, certain healthcare services, or a specific category of families.
3. **What happens if it is approved or rejected?** The practical meaning of a yes or no vote depends on the measure's wording and the law already in place.
4. **What will it cost?** Look for fiscal estimates, taxes, administrative expenses, funding sources, and potential effects on public services.
5. **Who will implement and enforce it?** Responsibility may belong to a state agency, school district, healthcare regulator, court, or local government.
6. **What safeguards and review processes exist?** Ask whether individuals can challenge a decision, request records, file complaints, or seek an appeal.
7. **What evidence supports the stated goals?** Look for credible research, financial analysis, administrative data, and clearly identified assumptions rather than unsupported predictions.

These questions do not tell people how to vote. They provide a method for understanding what their vote—or an official decision—could actually accomplish.

11. What Families Should Do After Election Day

Election Day is one event. Government accountability is an ongoing process.

The most useful next step is to examine what the election changed in your own state, county, city, and school district. Start with the official election results. Determine which measures were approved, rejected, or remain subject to additional counting. Then identify their effective dates.

Some newly approved policies may require administrative rulemaking, additional funding, or implementation guidance before residents experience practical changes. Others may face legal challenges. Families should not assume that a result reported on election night is final certification.

Next, review the officials responsible for implementation. School boards typically publish agendas, minutes, and policy documents. City councils and county governments maintain public records concerning budgets, programs, and decisions. State

legislatures provide information about introduced and enacted legislation.

Parents can use these resources to identify upcoming decisions before they become emergencies. For families navigating school concerns, written communication is especially valuable.

Keep copies of important school policies, correspondence, parentage documents, and records relating to significant decisions. When contacting a school, ask for the relevant written policy and the individual responsible for implementation.

If a disagreement arises, describe the facts, explain the concern, and request clarification or corrective action. For healthcare questions, keep relevant coverage information and consult qualified professionals about current legal requirements.

When family-law protections are uncertain, seek advice specific to your state and family circumstances. The goal is preparation rather than panic.

Not every policy change requires immediate legal action. But understanding the rules before a problem develops can make it easier to respond effectively if one does.

12. Teaching the Next Generation About Civic Responsibility

There is another dimension to political engagement that deserves greater attention. Our children are watching how adults participate in public life.

They notice how parents discuss elections. They hear the language used to describe people with different political beliefs. They observe whether disagreements are handled with curiosity, hostility, respect, or contempt.

For fathers, this creates an opportunity to teach a lesson larger than any particular election. Civic responsibility begins with understanding that other people may hold different views, while everyone remains accountable for their conduct.

Parents can explain what local government does, how laws are made, and why different people reach different conclusions about policy. Children can learn that elections involve questions of evidence, priorities, competing interests, and consequences.

They can also learn that a person's dignity should not depend on whether others agree with them. These lessons are especially relevant for families whose identities or relationships regularly become subjects of public debate.

A child raised by two fathers should not have to carry the responsibility of defending an entire community. A child with a transgender family member should not be expected to explain complicated legal disagreements.

A child whose parents disagree politically should not be made to feel that healthy disagreement requires withdrawing love. Adults are responsible for modeling a more constructive approach.

That means separating political criticism from personal cruelty, verifying information before sharing it, and acknowledging when a subject is complicated. It also means teaching children that they can participate in civic life without surrendering their values or treating other people as enemies.

Democracy requires disagreement. Healthy communities require knowing how to live with it.

13. Nonpartisan Does Not Mean Uninformed

A nonpartisan examination does not require pretending that every policy has the same consequences. Some measures expand legal protections. Others establish restrictions. Some shift public spending. Others change administrative

procedures or the balance between competing legal interests.

These effects should be described accurately, even when they provoke strong reactions. Fair reporting does not mean avoiding difficult facts. It means making claims that can be supported, distinguishing evidence from opinion, and describing competing perspectives without inventing equivalence.

For example, it is possible to report accurately that a measure restricts certain students' participation in athletics while also explaining its supporters' stated rationale concerning fairness.

It is possible to describe constitutional protections for marriage equality without claiming that every family-law problem has been resolved. It is possible to recognize legitimate parental responsibilities while examining the circumstances under which student confidentiality may be protected by law.

Complexity is not a weakness. It is part of responsible journalism.

The question is not whether every reader agrees with every policy discussed. The question is whether readers have enough accurate information to understand what happened and what comes next. That is the purpose of this guide.

14. The Decisions Still Ahead

The November 3 election is over, but the political and legal work continues. Newly elected officials will begin governing. Legislatures will debate bills. Schools will review procedures and budgets. Agencies will prepare implementation guidance. Courts will continue considering disputes over legal interpretation and constitutional authority.

And communities will continue debating how public resources should be allocated and how competing rights and responsibilities should be balanced.

The 2026 election did not produce one national answer to every question affecting LGBTQ+ families. It produced different decisions in different places, reflecting the complexity of American federalism and public opinion.

Virginia voters supported removing the state's constitutional prohibition on same-sex marriage. Vermont voters supported explicit equal-protection language. Several states approved new restrictions concerning school athletics. Washington voters rejected a proposal to restore earlier parental-notification and records-access provisions.

Other states made decisions affecting reproductive healthcare and the legal frameworks governing medical services. Meanwhile, communities considered school financing, public facilities, taxes, and local governance.

These outcomes will not affect every family in the same way. But they reinforce an important reality: the laws shaping family life are not written exclusively in Washington, D.C. They are also developed and implemented in state capitols, county offices, school board meetings, healthcare systems, and city halls.

That makes local knowledge indispensable.

The Last Word: Your Family Is More Than a Political Position

A father should know whether the law recognizes his parental relationship. He should understand the school policies affecting his children. He should know where to find reliable healthcare information, how to evaluate government decisions, and how to respond when public policy affects his household.

Those responsibilities are not partisan. They are part of informed parenting.

For gay and queer fathers, political awareness may carry an additional emotional burden because family identity

itself is sometimes discussed as a public controversy. But a family is more than a campaign issue.

It is a daily commitment built through care, responsibility, protection, sacrifice, and presence. An election can influence the legal and institutional environment in which that family lives. It does not determine the worth of the love and commitment within the household.

The challenge is to understand the distinction without minimizing the significance of public policy.

The ballot determines more than who wins an election. It helps shape the institutions our families must navigate afterward.

That is why the work cannot end when voting closes. It continues when parents read school policies, attend public meetings, ask officials difficult questions, examine budgets, and teach their children how democracy works.

It continues when families distinguish facts from fear and promises from enforceable protections. And it continues when neighbors with different political beliefs remain willing to discuss the future of their communities without abandoning fairness, accuracy, or respect.

The election may be over. The responsibilities of citizenship remain.

Because protecting the future of family begins with understanding the decisions being made in the present.

The Family Civic Resource File

USA.gov — Voting and Elections
https://www.usa.gov/voting-and-elections

Vote.gov — Voter information
https://vote.gov

VOTE411 — Nonpartisan candidate and ballot research
https://www.vote411.org

Ballotpedia — Election measures and comparisons
https://ballotpedia.org

U.S. Department of Education — FERPA
https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/ferpa

Virginia Department of Elections
https://www.elections.virginia.gov

Washington Secretary of State
https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections

California Legislative Analyst's Office
https://www.lao.ca.gov/ballotanalysis/propositions

Congress.gov — Federal legislation
https://www.congress.gov

United States Courts
https://www.uscourts.gov

Reporting & Editorial Notes

This article was prepared November 11, 2026, following the November 3 U.S. midterm elections. Election outcomes referenced in the article were drawn from available official election information, Ballotpedia election tracking, and contemporary reporting, including coverage from Reuters, Associated Press, STAT, Axios, and Virginia Mercury.

Election results reported shortly after Election Day may be unofficial pending canvassing, certification, recounts, or legal proceedings. Readers should verify current totals and effective dates through the relevant election authority.

The article provides a national policy overview rather than a personalized ballot guide. Local measures, school-board responsibilities, healthcare requirements, and family-law protections vary by jurisdiction.

Editorial independence: Courageous Love Collective Magazine does not endorse a political party or candidate in this feature. Descriptions of policy effects, competing viewpoints, and public concerns are intended to inform readers rather than direct their political choices.

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VOTING,
AMERICA!
Your voice. Your values. Our democracy.
Thank you for making a difference.

Money & Family Building: The $200,000 Question



Feature Report

Money & Family Building: The $200,000 Question

Surrogacy, adoption, foster care, employer benefits, and the uncomfortable economic truth behind one deeply personal question: who can afford to become a father?



Fatherhood can begin with love, planning, legal paperwork, and—sometimes—a startling price tag. For many prospective fathers, the path to parenthood is shaped not only by desire, but by wealth, workplace support, and access to trustworthy information. This feature breaks down the real costs, the legal realities, and the financial strategies behind surrogacy, private adoption, foster care, and family-building benefits.

> *"The question is not whether fatherhood has value. The question is why access to it can depend so heavily on money."*

Inside this feature: Surrogacy costs • Adoption pathways • Foster care realities • Employer benefits • Tax credits • Legal preparation • Budgeting tips

Feature Report

The Real Price Spectrum

The phrase '$200,000 question' captures one possible road to fatherhood—not all of them.





> ***"Money shapes access, but it does not define someone's capacity to love or parent."***

Family-building costs vary by pathway, and there is no single price for fatherhood. Gestational surrogacy often costs about $200,000 to $250,000+, while private domestic infant adoption often ranges from about $20,000 to $60,000. International adoption often costs about $25,000 to $70,000. Adoption from foster care often has little or no upfront adoption cost, though families still face travel, licensing, and time costs.

These are typical estimates, not guarantees. Laws, agency fees, insurance coverage, travel, failed matches, and legal complications can move prices substantially higher or lower, sometimes by tens of thousands of dollars.

It's also important to remember that ongoing child-raising costs—like housing, health care, childcare, food, and education—are separate from entry costs and are a long-term responsibility in any pathway.

Even the "cheapest" route can still require emotional endurance, time flexibility, and stable housing, all of which are essential to bringing a child into a secure and loving home.

Typical Cost Ranges by Pathway

Gestational Surrogacy

Often about

$200,000 to $250,000+

Private Domestic Infant Adoption

Often about

$20,000 to $60,000

International Adoption

Often about

$25,000 to $70,000

Adoption from Foster Care

Often has little or no upfront adoption cost, though families still face travel, licensing, and time costs.

What pushes costs up?

- **Agency fees:** the cost of matching, screening, and ongoing professional support.
- **Legal work:** attorney fees and required court procedures.
- **Travel:** domestic or international trips for meetings, placements, and court steps.
- **Medical care:** fertility treatment, surrogacy-related care, or required health screenings.
- **Time away from work:** unpaid leave, reduced hours, or travel time during the process.

Pages Ahead: Surrogacy Up Close • Adoption Pathways • Planning and Budgeting • Building Your Team

Money & Family Building

Surrogacy: Why the Bill Climbs

Surrogacy is often the most expensive route to fatherhood because it combines medicine, law, coordination, and risk.



The Cost Breakdown

Agency / matching	***$20,000 – $50,000***
Fertility treatment and embryo work	***$30,000 – $60,000+***
Surrogate compensation and support	***$50,000 – $80,000+***
Legal / parentage work	***$10,000 – $20,000+***
Insurance, travel, and incidentals	***Can add tens of thousands more***

Costs vary widely by state, clinic, and whether previous embryos already exist.

Gestational surrogacy brings together multiple moving parts, and each adds meaningful cost. Here are the major components and what they cover:

Agency or matching fees. Many intended fathers work with an agency to find, screen, and support a gestational carrier, which can include matching, case management, and coordination throughout the journey.

IVF and embryo creation. Surrogacy typically involves in vitro fertilization (IVF) to create embryos, including monitoring, lab work, and embryo transfer.

Compensation to the gestational carrier. Carriers receive base compensation, plus additional support such as for lost wages, maternity needs, and related expenses.

Legal contracts and parentage orders. Attorneys draft and negotiate a surrogacy agreement that protects everyone's rights and establish legal parentage (often through a pre- or post-birth parentage order).

Medications. Fertility medications for the carrier (and sometimes the egg source) can be a significant expense.

Screening. Comprehensive medical and psychological screening for the carrier, and often for the intended fathers, helps ensure safety and a higher chance of success.

Travel. Travel and lodging may be needed for medical visits, transfer, and the birth, especially if the carrier or clinic is in another state.

Insurance issues. Some carriers have coverage that can be used, while others require a separate policy, which can be costly and may not cover all surrogacy-related care.

Escrow management. Funds are typically held in escrow to ensure timely, transparent payments to the carrier and service providers throughout the process.

Possible repeat cycles. A transfer can be unsuccessful, and additional embryo transfers (and related expenses) may be needed.

Plan for uncertainty

Transfers can fail, timelines can stretch (for example, if a new cycle is needed or if legal steps take longer), and insurance language matters, including what is and is not covered.

Best for:

people who need a biologically related path and can sustain complex costs.



Feature Report

Adoption: Several Paths, Several Price Tags

Adoption is not one process. Public, private, and international adoption each bring different costs, timelines, and legal realities.



Home study basics

Most adoptions require a home study. It helps ensure a safe, stable, and supportive home for a child. A home study typically includes:

- ☑ **Background checks**—criminal history and child protection checks for all adults in the home.
- ☑ **Interviews**—conversations about your family, motivation, and readiness to parent.
- ☑ **Training**—preparation on child development, adoption issues, and trauma-informed care
- ☑ **Finances**—a review to confirm you can meet a child's ongoing needs.
- ☑ **Home safety review**—a look a your home for basic safety and appropriate living space.

Private Domestic Adoption

Private domestic infant adoption often involves agency or consultant fees, birth-parent expenses where allowed, legal work, home study costs, and travel. Total costs can vary based on the agency, services, and the specifics of your situation.

International Adoption

International adoption can include dossier preparation (e.g., documents, records, and official approvals), international travel, translation of key documents, immigration processing (e.g., for a child's visa and U.S. entry), and shifting country rules, which can affect both cost and timeline.

Foster Care Adoption

Foster care adoption usually has far lower upfront cost and may come with state support, such as ongoing adoption assistance for the child's needs. It's important to remember that the goal of foster care is reunification with the child's family first, not adoption first.



Comparing Adoption Costs

Typical ranges can vary by state, agency, country, and individual circumstances, but many families encounter costs in these ranges:

Private Domestic Adoption	About **$20,000 – $60,000**
International Adoption	About **$25,000 – $70,000**
Foster Care Adoption	Often little or no upfront adoption fee.

> *"The cost of adoption is easier to quote than the emotional cost of waiting."*

Feature Report

Foster Care: Lower Cost, Higher Complexity

The least expensive route financially can still demand the most patience, flexibility, and emotional resilience.



Becoming licensed for foster care usually requires training, home inspections, references, paperwork, and ongoing communication with the child welfare system. These steps help ensure that your home is safe, stable, and ready to meet a child's needs.

The primary goal of foster care is reunification with the child's birth family when it is safe and possible. Foster parents play a vital role in caring for the child during this time and often support the family's plan for a safe return home.

In some cases, a child may later become eligible for adoption if reunification is not possible. Families may also receive support such as monthly subsidies or Medicaid, depending on the case and the state's policies.

The hidden costs to plan for

Foster care can also come with significant, less visible costs:

- Time off work for training, court hearings, and meetings.
- Therapy appointments for the child (often essential and ongoing).
- Transportation to school, medical care, visits, and services.
- Larger housing needs, such as an additional bedroom or more space.
- Emotional unpredictability, including periods of adjustment, loss, and change that can be challenging for the whole family.



What foster parents need most

- ☑ Schedule flexibility
- ☑ Trauma-informed support
- ☑ Realistic expectations
- ☑ Stable income
- ☑ Community backup

Foster care is a service to children, not merely an alternate adoption shortcut.

Feature Report

Employer Benefits Can Change the Math

For some fathers, the most important family-building tool is not a bank account—it is a generous workplace policy.



> *"The difference between a dream delayed and a dream possible may be buried in an employee handbook."*

Some employers now offer a remarkable range of family-building benefits, including adoption reimbursement, surrogacy reimbursement, fertility benefits, donor coverage, counseling access, and paid parental leave. These benefits can reduce financial, logistical, and emotional barriers dramatically, turning a path that once felt out of reach into a realistic plan.

However, the details matter. Coverage can vary widely from one employer to another, and understanding the fine print is essential. Key factors to review include lifetime caps, eligibility rules, in-network requirements, tax treatment, and whether reimbursements arrive before or after expenses are paid.

Employer Family-Building Benefits at a Glance

- ☑ **Adoption Reimbursement**
  Helps cover qualified adoption expenses, such as agency fees and home studies.
- ☑ **Surrogacy Reimbursement**
  Can offset eligible surrogacy-related costs, including medical and coordination fees.
- ☑ **Fertility Benefits**
  May include treatments such as IUI or IVF, with coverage that can vary by plan.
- ☑ **Donor Coverage**
  Can help with the costs of donor sperm, donor eggs, or donor embryos.
- ☑ **Counseling Access**
  Provides access to mental health or family-building counseling for added support.
- ☑ **Paid Parental Leave**
  Gives time to bond with a new child, with the length and pay level set by the employer.



Questions to ask HR

- ☑ *What pathways are covered?*
- ☑ *What is the dollar cap?*
- ☑ *Are legal fees reimbursable?*
- ☑ *Is travel included?*
- ☑ *How is parental leave structured?*
- ☑ *Are unmarried or non-gestational parents equally covered?*

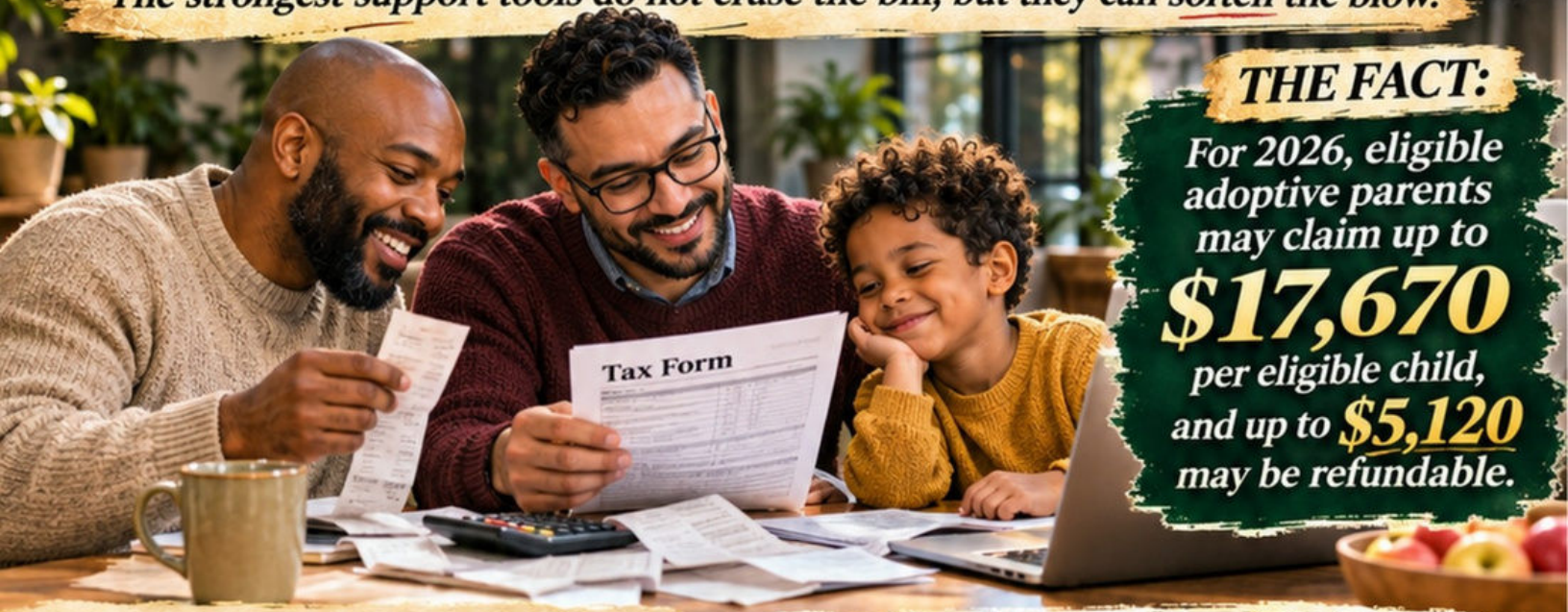
Read the Summary Plan Description Carefully

Your summary plan description (SPD) is the best source for the specifics: what's covered, any limits or exclusions, how to qualify, network requirements, tax considerations, and how reimbursements work. Reading it closely can help you avoid surprises and make the most of the benefits your employer offers.

Feature Report

Tax Credits, Grants, and Other Real Help

The strongest support tools do not erase the bill, but they can soften the blow.



THE FACT:

For 2026, eligible adoptive parents may claim up to **$17,670** per eligible child, and up to **$5,120** may be refundable.

The adoption tax credit, explained in plain terms

The federal adoption tax credit is a tax benefit that can help offset many of the out-of-pocket costs of adoption, such as agency fees, court costs, travel, and other qualified adoption expenses. For 2026, éligible adoptive parents may claim up to **$17,670 per eligible child**, and **up to $5,120 may be refundable**, which means you could receive that amount back even if you do not owe that much in taxes.

How much you can claim depends on several factors. **Eligibility, documentation, income phase-outs, and the nature of the adoption** (for example, domestic, international, or a child with special needs) all affect how the credit works for your family.

Also, **employer adoption assistance** may be available. Some employers offer financial reimbursement for qualified adoption expenses, which can reduce what you pay out of pocket. Check your benefits materials or HR department to see what your workplace offers.

It is important to know that **surrogacy expenses are generally not covered** by the **adoption tax credit**, even when parentage is established through a legal process after the birth.



Grants, fundraising, and community support

Beyond tax credits, many families find help through adoption grants, fundraising, and community support. Grants may come from nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, or adoption advocacy organizations, and can provide direct financial assistance for qualifying adoption expenses. Fundraising—such as family campaigns or community events—can also help bridge the gap, while support groups and local networks can offer both financial leads and practical guidance.

Before you move forward, **verify the legitimacy** of any organization or campaign, and **understand the tax consequences.** Some grant funds or fundraising proceeds may be considered taxable income, depending on how they are structured.

Before you count on the money

- **Confirm timing.** Know when funds or tax benefits can be used, so they align with your adoption or family-building timeline.
- **Keep records.** Save receipts, contracts, agency statements, travel records, and other key documentation.
- **Talk with a qualified tax professional.** A tax advisor can review your specific situation, explain how the credit and any other support apply, and help you avoid surprises at tax time.

Feature Report

Legal Protection Is Not Optional

A family-building budget that ignores legal work is not a budget. It is wishful thinking.



Building a family through surrogacy, adoption, foster care, or assisted reproduction is more than a medical, emotional, and financial journey—it is a legal one. Intended parents must understand parentage law in their state and, when relevant, complete a second-parent or confirmatory adoption to ensure both parents are fully recognized. A home study may be required for adoption and foster care and can also be part of some surrogacy or clinic processes.

Legal requirements do not stop at your home state. Parentage recognition can differ by state, and those differences matter when you travel, move, or use assisted reproduction across state lines. Know the interstate rules early, build clear contracts with surrogates or agencies, and have wills that name guardians for your child and spell out your intentions. Review insurance language—on health, life, and disability policies—to confirm that your partner and children are covered as family.

Because the laws are complex and evolving, work with lawyers who have real experience in LGBTQ+ family creation. The right legal guidance helps you avoid costly gaps, protect your parental rights, and give your child the security of a legally recognized, lasting family.

> ***"Hope may build a family emotionally; paperwork protects it in the real world."***



Your legal checklist

Parentage order.
Obtain a court order establishing both parents' legal parentage.

Adoption or confirmatory step if recommended.
Complete a second-parent or confirmatory adoption where advised, to strengthen and clarify parental rights.

Beneficiary updates.
Review and update life, health, and retirement beneficiaries to include your partner and child.

Will and guardianship documents.
Create a will and name guardians for your child if something happens to you.

Health directives.
Put in place health care directives (such as a medical power of attorney) so your partner can make decisions if needed.

Secure record keeping.
Keep organized, accessible copies of key documents—court orders, adoptions, contracts, home studies, and insurance confirmations.

Feature Report

How to Budget for the Path You Choose

Getting to parenthood is only phase one. Staying financially stable after the child arrives matters just as much.



A strong family-building budget turns hope into a practical plan. It you move forward with confidence by accounting for the real costs—from the journey to parenthood to the everyday expenses that come after your child arrives. Here's how to build one that works in real life.

Set a target range. Research the typical costs for your path—such as surrogacy, adoption, or foster care—and create a realistic range that includes program fees, agency costs, medical expenses, and travel if needed.

Create a separate savings account. Keep family-building funds in their own account so the money is tracked, protected, and ready when payments are due.

Build an emergency cushion. Aim for three to six months of essential living expenses. This cushion can help if timelines shift, costs increase, or income pauses.

Estimate unpaid leave. Find out how much time you or your partner may take off, whether it is unpaid or only partially paid, and plan for the temporary change in income.

Price insurance changes. Check how your health insurance may change with a birth, surrogacy, or adoption, and estimate any new monthly premiums or out-of-pocket costs.

Your Family-Building Budget Checklist

- ☐ Set a target cost range for your path.
- ☐ Open a separate savings account.
- ☐ Build an emergency cushion (3–6 months).
- ☐ Estimate unpaid or partially paid leave.
- ☐ Price insurance changes and new costs.
- ☐ Plan for childcare, medical co-pays, and school-related expenses.
- ☐ Avoid high-interest debt where possible.

Prepare for ongoing costs. Look beyond placement or birth. Budget for childcare (such as daycare or a nanny), medical co-pays (like routine visits, vaccines, or follow-up care), and future school-related expenses (including supplies, fees, activities, and after-school care). These costs can add up quickly, so it helps to plan for them early.

Avoid high-interest debt. Whenever possible, steer clear of credit cards or loans with high interest rates. They can add long-term stress and make it harder to stay financially stable during a season that is already demanding.

Be mindful of emotional spending. The journey to parenthood can be emotional and intense. It's easy to feel pressure to say yes quickly, upgrade plans, or over-commit just to keep things moving. Take a breath, trust your plan, and make decisions that are right for your family's long-term well-being.

A healthier financial plan

- ***Preserve emergency savings.*** Keep a dedicated cushion so unexpected costs do not derail the plan.
- ***Understand refund policies.*** Know what is refundable, what is not, and the timing of any returns.
- ***Price legal reviews early.*** Get clear, written estimates for needed agreements, including post-placement or adoption steps.
- ***Leave room for delays.*** Build flexibility for longer timelines, additional requirements, or extra costs.
- ***Revisit the budget after placement.*** Update your plan once your child is home and your actual expenses are clear.



"A child deserves love—but also parents who can breathe after the first bill arrives."

Feature Report

The Questions Worth Asking Now

The smartest fathers do not begin with a contract. They begin with clarity.



Becoming a father can follow more than one path, and each path comes with real choices, trade-offs, and unknowns. The goal is not to find a perfect route, but to ask the right questions—together, honestly, and early—so you can build a plan that fits your family, your values, and your life today and tomorrow.



A Planning Checklist for Your Family

- ☐ ***Why this path?***
  What draws us to this route, and how does it align with the kind of family and fatherhood we want to build?
- ☐ ***What is our true budget ceiling?***
  What can we realistically afford—upfront, throughout the process, and after our child joins our family?
- ☐ ***How much uncertainty can we absorb?***
  How will we handle longer timelines, changing costs, or outcomes that are not guaranteed?
- ☐ ***What support system will help us through waiting, paperwork, and parenting?***
  Who can we lean on for emotional support, practical help, and informed guidance along the way?
- ☐ ***Are we choosing a route because it fits our family—or because it is the only one we can afford?***
  Is this our first choice for our family, or are we ruling out other paths mainly due to cost?

Start here

Build a strong, informed foundation by connecting with these key resources:

- ***Licensed family law attorney***
- **Qualified tax professional**
- **Employer HR/benefits department**
- **Foster/adoption agency or county office**
- **Mental health support**
- **Experienced LGBTQ+ parent networks**

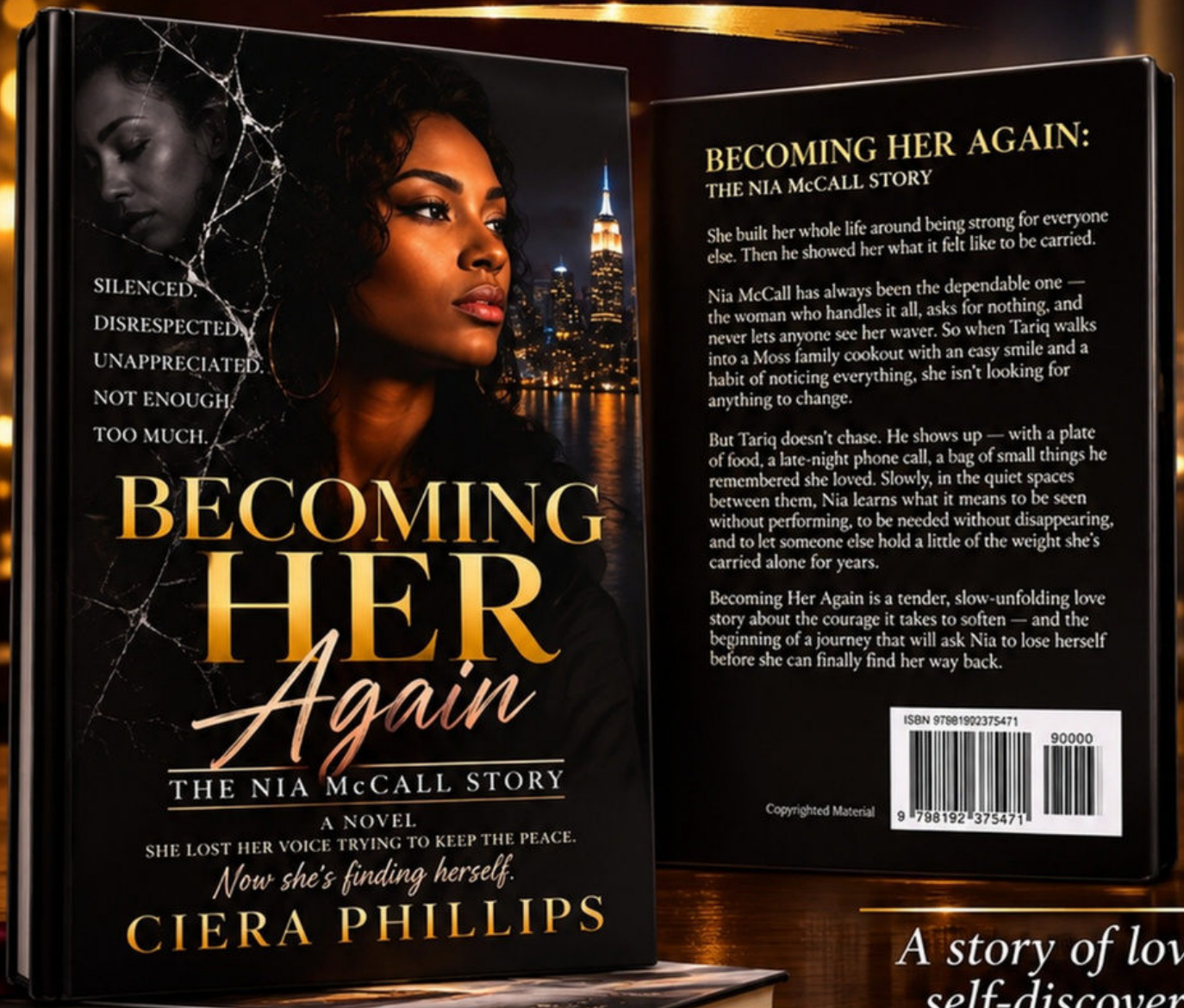
The uncomfortable truth is not that fatherhood has a price, but that access to the path toward it is shaped by policy, workplace privilege, geography, and money. Recognizing that reality does not make the dream smaller—it makes your plan stronger, more realistic, and more resilient for the family you are building.

"The $200,000 question is really a fairness question."

A POWERFUL NEW NOVEL

BECOMING HER *Again*

THE NIA McCALL STORY



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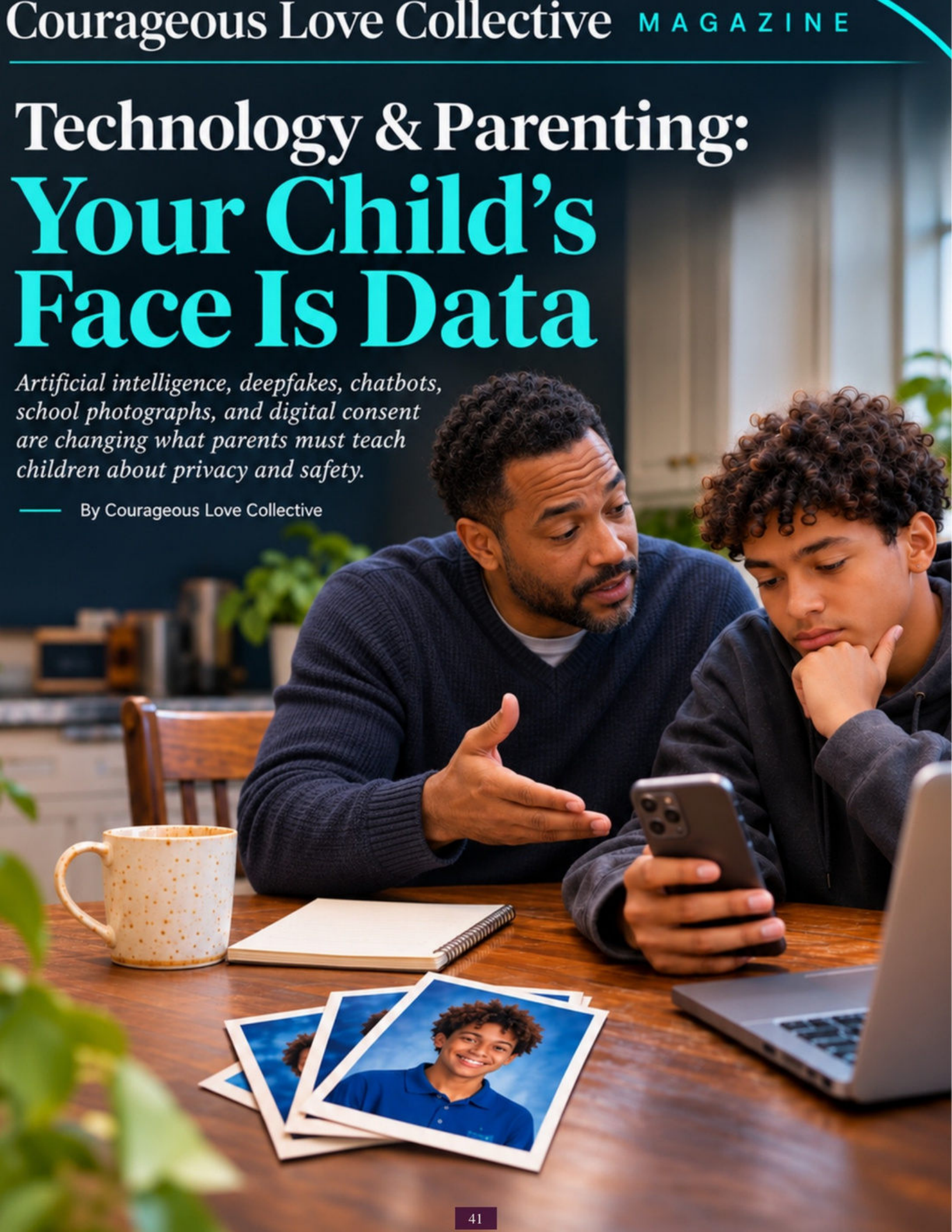
Technology & Parenting: Your Child's Face Is Data

Artificial intelligence, deepfakes, chatbots, school photographs, and digital consent are changing what parents must teach children about privacy and safety.

By Courageous Love Collective



Courageous Love Collective MAGAZINE

Technology & Parenting: Your Child's Face Is Data

Artificial intelligence, deepfakes, chatbots, school photographs, and digital consent are changing what parents must teach children about privacy and safety.

By Courageous Love Collective | November 2026



There was a time when protecting a child's photograph meant keeping the family album somewhere safe. Today, that same photograph can travel across platforms, be copied without permission, analyzed by software, or manipulated into something that never happened. The family photo we proudly share online may reveal more than we realize. A school uniform can identify where a child studies. A birthday post can disclose age. A photo outside the home may reveal a neighborhood. Parents are no longer protecting only childhood memories. They are protecting a digital identity a child may carry for years.



When a Photograph Becomes Personal Data

A photograph is more than a memory. Depending on how it is processed, it can become part of a digital profile containing identifying information. Facial-recognition technology can analyze facial characteristics and generate a biometric template. Not every photograph is automatically converted into one, but the risk grows when images are collected and analyzed without meaningful consent. Even ordinary photographs can expose personal information through visible details, captions, location tags, and metadata.

Before posting a child's photograph, parents should ask three questions: Who can see it? What information does it reveal? And could someone use it in a way my child would not understand or approve?

> *"Parents are no longer protecting only memories. They are protecting a digital identity."*

Inside this feature: Deepfakes • School photos • Chatbots • COPPA & FERPA • Digital consent • A 30-minute privacy reset

The Deepfake Problem

When seeing is no longer believing, parents need a new language for safety.

By Courageous Love Collective | November 2026



AI can generate convincing fake photos, videos, and audio, often called deepfakes. These media can look and sound real, even when they are completely made up. For children, the harm can be serious, including humiliation, false accusations, impersonation, harassment, and sexual exploitation.

Ordinary photos can also be repurposed. A simple school picture, a social media post, or a casual snapshot can be edited, combined, or used to create new and misleading content. That is why parents should teach children that realistic-looking content is not automatically authentic. Seeing someone in a photo or video is no longer proof that it is real.

If you discover a possible deepfake involving your child, respond quickly and calmly. Document where the image appeared, including the platform, account name, and a screenshot if possible. Report it to the platform and request that it be removed. If the image involves students or affects the school community, contact school administrators so they can investigate and take appropriate action. Avoid downloading or resharing explicit material involving minors, as this can spread the harm and may be illegal.

Two important support resources are the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, which provides reporting tools and guidance for online exploitation, and Take It Down, a free service that helps remove or stop the sharing of intimate images, including AI-generated content, of minors.



School Photographs, School Rules

School photos may appear in yearbooks, district websites, apps, and vendor systems. These images can be used for student identification, school communications, and promotional materials, and they are often stored in digital systems outside the classroom.

Parents should ask who receives the photos, how long they are stored, whether they are shared with third parties, and what opt-out choices exist. A permission slip is not the same as informed consent.

> *“Parents must teach children that a realistic image is not always a real one.”*

Next: Chatbots • FERPA & COPPA • Consent at home

When a Chatbot Feels Like a Friend

Children may treat artificilal intelligence ilke a confidant long before they understand what it remembers.

By Courageous Love Collective | November 2026



AI chatbots can sound personal, attentive, and emotionally supportive, which makes them appealing to children who feel lonely, embarrassed, or coriucs, a chattoit arn respond quickly, ask follow-up questions, and offer reassuring language, which can feel a lot like talking to a friend who always has time.

But a chatbot is not a therapist, trusted adult, or substittus parent. Children may disclose family conflicts, andresets, photos, or privaše feelings without understanding how those conversations are stored or used. What feels like a private chat can become part of a data record that may be analyzed, retained, or shared under a service's policies.

Parents can help by reviewing age limits, privacy settings, and what information should never be shared, such as hone addresses, full newes, school deaiiks, passsords, photos, or senstive family information. Just as important, make sure children feel eafe coming to a trusted adult with questions, concerns, or uncomfortable online interactions.



What the Law Does — and Does Not — Do

COPPA places requirements on covered online services collecting personal information from children under 13, such as proividing privacy notices, getting ueriffable parental consent in mday cases, and limifing how that information can be used.

FERPA governs qualifying education records maintained by covered schools, such as student records and certain school-related information. It sets sules for how those records can be used and shared.

Neither law guurantets thet every quild photo uploaded by a parent, school, or third party will remain pritute, Photos can still be shared, repurposno, or analyzed in ways that how not be covered by COPPA or FERPA, depending on where and how they are posted.

Quick law guide

COPPA	A federal law that sets rules for covered online services that colleet personal information from children under 13, including notice, perental consent, and limits on use.
FERPA	A federal law that governs qualifying education records maintained by covered schools, with rules for how those records can be used and shared.

> *"A child who feels safe asking questions offline is better equipped to recognize unsafe interactions online."*

Next: Consent • Privacy reset • Resource desk

Consent Starts at Home

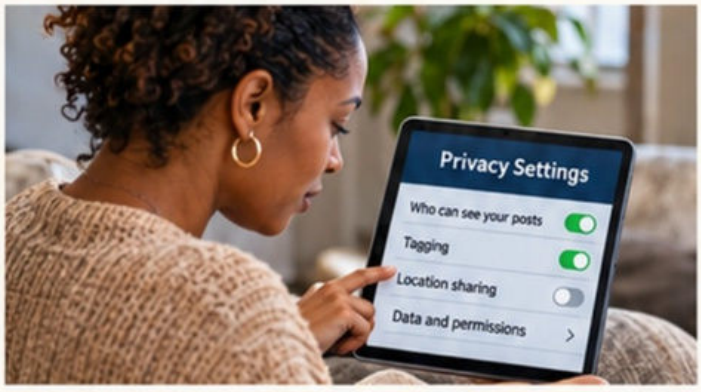
Children need more than rules. They need language, boundaries, and a sense that their image belongs to their story.



One of the most powerful lessons parents can teach is that a child deserves a say in how their image is shared. Before posting a photo, ask your child for permission. A simple conversation shows respect, builds trust, and helps children understand that their image is part of their identity and their story.

Be thoughtful about what you share. Avoid posting embarrassing or overly personal moments, such as discipline, accidents, or private struggles. Just as important, teach children that consent to take a photo is not the same as consent to post it. A child might be comfortable with a picture in the moment but not want it shared with a wider audience or kept online.

This matters even more when photos could reveal school information, home details, medical realities, or identity details the child is not ready to share. These kinds of details can make a child easier to find, expose sensitive information, or follow them long after the moment has passed.



> *"Protecting a child's future now includes protecting the digital identity they may carry for life."*

A Parent's 30-Minute Privacy Reset

- ☐ **Review social privacy settings.** Check who can see posts, photos, and personal information.
- ☐ **Audit old posts.** Look through past photos and updates, and remove anything that no longer feels appropriate.
- ☐ **Check school permissions.** Review how your child's image may be used in school photos, websites, newsletters, or social media.
- ☐ **Review apps and chatbots.** See what information is collected, shared, or stored, and adjust settings or remove what you do not use.
- ☐ **Teach children to report suspicious behavior.** Let them know they can talk to you if they see, receive, or feel uncomfortable about a photo or message online.
- ☐ **Create a family consent rule.** Agree together to ask before posting, respect a "no," and revisit the rule as your child grows.

The Future of Privacy Begins at Home

Parents cannot predict every new technology, platform, or trend. But they can prepare their children with something even more powerful: judgment, boundaries, consent, and the courage to speak up. When children understand that they have a voice and that their image and information matter, they are better prepared to navigate a digital world that will keep changing.

Parent Resource Desk

- **FTC –** Federal Trade Commission consumer and online privacy resources for families.
- **U.S. Department of Education –** Student privacy resources and information on educational records (FERPA).
- **NCMEC CyberTipline –** Report suspected online child exploitation at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.
- **Take It Down –** A free service to help remove or stop the spread of intimate images, including those shared without consent.

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Mental Health & Relationships

Who Holds the Father?

Fathers are expected to provide, protect and remain strong—but who notices when the protector is exhausted, isolated, or quietly falling apart?



Courageous Love Collective
MAGAZINE

Mental Health & Relationships

Who Holds the Father?

Fathers are often seen as the steady force—the provider, the protector, and the one who holds everything together. They are expected to show strength, keep things moving, and be the foundation for their families and loved ones.

But beneath that image of strength, many fathers are carrying silent battles. The pressure to perform—to always have the answers, to stay in control, and to never seem overwhelmed—can be heavy.

Financial strain can create constant stress, emotional isolation can make it hard to open up, and the expectations placed on them are often ones they rarely feel free to name. When fathers struggle, it doesn't just affect them. It can impact their relationships, parenting, work, and overall well-being.

The truth is, fathers need support too—a safe space to be real, to process what they're carrying, and to be reminded that they don't have to hold it all alone.

> *"Strength isn't the absence of struggle. It's the willingness to seek support while you lead, provide, and protect.*



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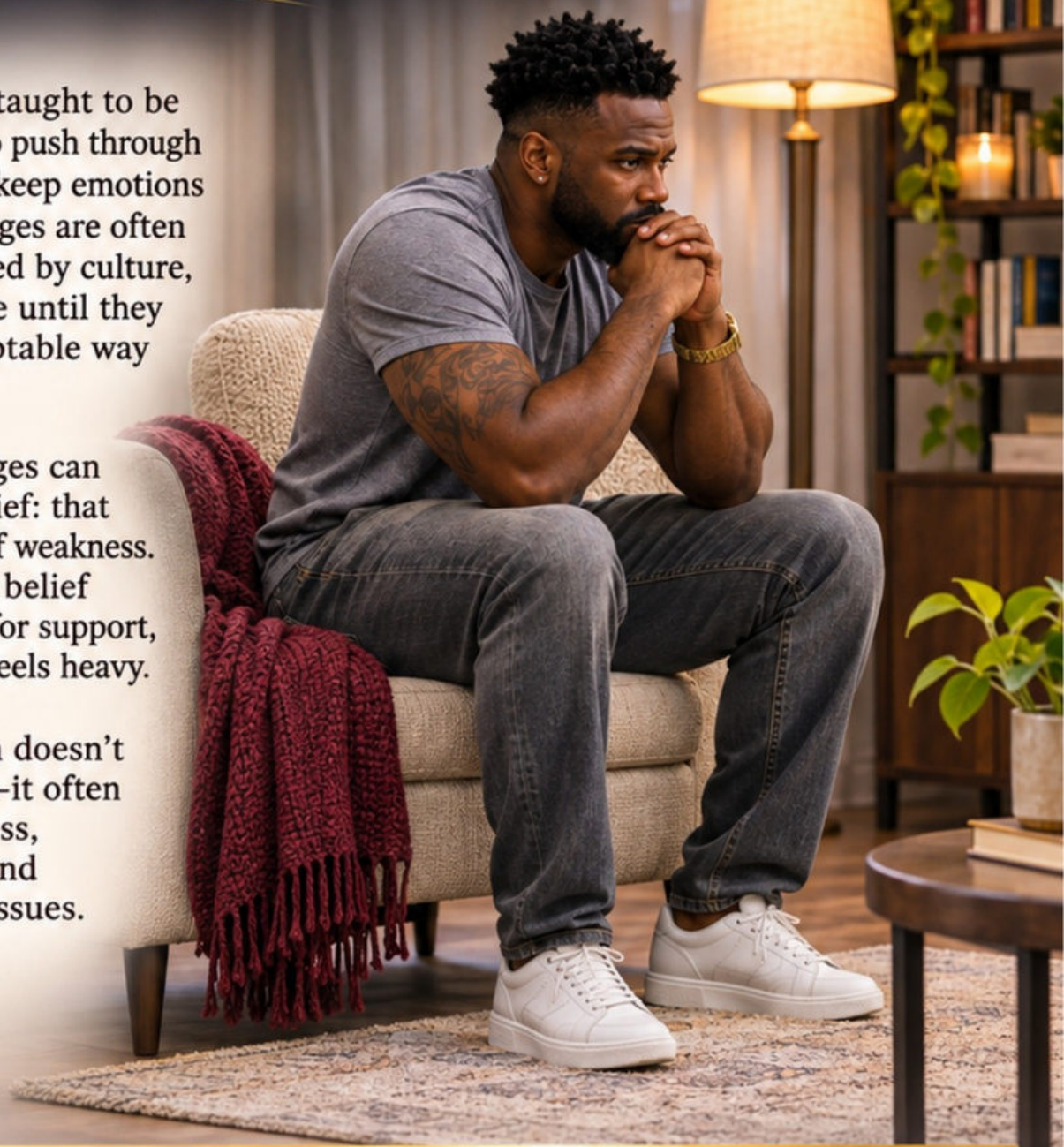
Mental Health & Relationships

The Silent Pressure to Be "Always Strong"



Many men are taught to be self-reliant, to push through pain, and to keep emotions in check. These messages are often passed down, reinforced by culture, and repeated over time until they feel like the only acceptable way to show strength.

But those same messages can create a dangerous belief: that seeking help is a sign of weakness. For many fathers, this belief makes it harder to ask for support, even when the weight feels heavy.

Emotional suppression doesn't make a man stronger—it often leads to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and even physical health issues.

A father does not stop being strong when he admits he is tired.

Courageous Love Collective
MAGAZINE

Mental Health & Relationships

When the Protector Is Running on Empty

Fathers can experience mental health challenges just like anyone else. The pressure to provide, protect, and keep everything together can sometimes leave even the strongest fathers feeling emotionally and physically drained.



Common signs a father may be struggling include:

- Constant fatigue or burnout
- Increased irritability or disconnection
- Withdrawing from loved ones
- Loss of interest in things once enjoyed
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Feeling overwhelmed or hopeless

Mental health challenges can affect fathers just like anyone else.

Mental Health & Relationships

The Impact on Relationships and Family



A father's mental and emotional well-being *shapes the atmosphere* at home. His overall sense of balance, peace, and support influences how family members connect, communicate, and navigate everyday life together.

When a father feels unsupported, stress can spill into partnerships, parenting interactions, and communication. The pressure he carries can make it harder to be present, patient, and emotionally available to the people who need him most.

But when fathers are mentally and emotionally well, families thrive. Children feel more secure, relationships are stronger, and the home becomes a place of greater peace.

When fathers are supported, the whole family feels safer.

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MAGAZINE

Mental Health & Relationships

Breaking the Stigma: Fathers Can Get Support Too



More fathers are beginning to speak openly about their mental health, and that shift is powerful. Therapy, support groups, faith communities, and trusted friends can provide safe spaces to talk, *process, and heal.*

Support might look like:

- Talking with a licensed counselor
- Joining a men's support group
- Leaning on a trusted friend or mentor
- Practicing healthy stress relief (exercise, rest, hobbies)
- Being honest with a partner about how you're feeling

Support is not weakness. It is part of healing.

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Mental Health & Relationships

How Partners, Families and Communities Can Help

Fathers do not always ask for help, so it is often up to the people around them to notice, check in, and create space for real conversations.



You can support the fathers in your life by:

- Checking in regularly and listening without judgment
- Recognizing and affirming their efforts
- Encouraging rest and time for themselves
- Supporting their mental health care decisions
- Reminding them it's okay to talk about what's heavy

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Fathers are more than providers and protectors. They are whole people with real emotional needs. When we hold space for their mental health, we strengthen not only men, but the relationships, families, and communities that depend on them.

COURAGEOUS LOVE
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MAGAZINE

Culture, Faith & Identity



The Fatherhood We Refuse to *Inherit*

Gay, queer and trans fathers examine masculinity, tenderness, faith, discipline and the generational patterns they are determined to end.

By Courageous Love Collective

Inside this feature: masculinity • tenderness • faith • discipline • ending harmful cycles

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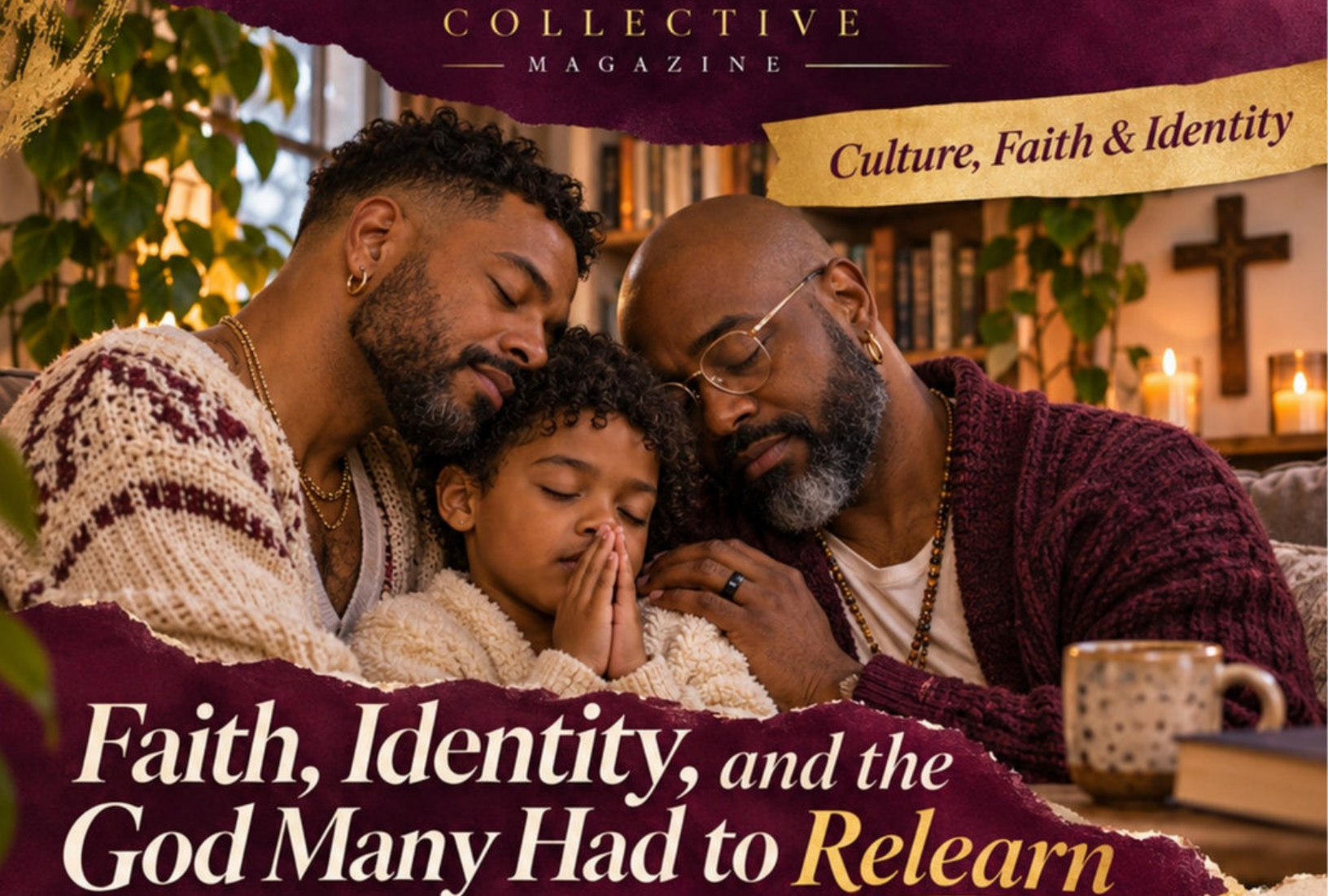
Culture, Faith & Identity



Faith, Identity, and the God Many Had to Relearn

Many fathers first encountered faith through fear, shame, or silence around queer life. Some were taught that who they loved, how they parented, or the families they built placed them outside of God's care. For years, faith felt like a test to pass, a part of themselves to hide, or a relationship marked more by judgment than by belonging.

But fatherhood pushed them toward a different kind of faith—one rooted in compassion, accountability, justice, gentleness, and truth. In caring for their children, many began to see God not as a gatekeeper, but as a source of expansive love, repair, and courage. This reimagined faith didn't erase the past, but it did make room for wholeness: a faith big enough to hold their identity, their family, and their calling as fathers.

> *"Some fathers left the theology of fear and kept the language of grace."*

Inside this feature: masculinity • tenderness • faith • discipline • ending harmful cycles



Masculinity Without Fear

Gay, queer, and trans fathers are rejecting a narrow, inherited script about what it means to be a man—one that demands emotional distance, rewards domination, and insists that strength requires hardness. They are not interested in passing along a model of masculinity that teaches boys to mute their feelings, prove themselves through control, or equate care with weakness.

Instead, they are choosing a braver, more expansive way of fatherivg—one rooted in connection, care, and integrity. Their masculinity is not bullt on frar of being seen as "tos soff" or "not enough," but on a deeper confidence that strength and tenderness can—and do—coexist.

> *"The fathers changing the script are not becoming less strong. They are becoming less afraid of love."*

These fathers are choosing:

- ***Presence***—showing up, consistently and attentively, in the everyday.
- ***Accountability***—owning their mistakes, repairing, and modeling growth.
- ***Affection***—freely giving and receiving love, without shame or limits.
- ***Boundaries***—honoring their own needs and teaching their children to do the same.
- ***Emotional honesty***—naming feelings, welcoming hard conversations, and creating a home where all emotions belong.

COURAGEOUS LOVE
COLLECTIVE
MAGAZINE



Discipline Without Repeating Harm

These fathers are not choosing permissiveness. They are choosing safety before shame, guidance before intimidation, consequences without cruelty, repair after rupture, and respect that flows both ways.

> *"Fear may create obedience for a moment. Safety builds trust for a lifetime."*

What they are choosing instead

- Safety before shame
- Guidance before intimidation
- Consequences without cruelty
- Repair after rupture
- Respect that flows both ways

COURAGEOUS LOVE
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MAGAZINE

Culture, Faith & Identity



The Legacy They Intend to *Leave*

We are breaking the chain of harm that has too often been passed down in the name of manhood and tradition. The legacy we refuse is one shaped by ***emotional abandonment, silence, misogyny, violence, contempt,*** and the belief that ***care belongs only to mothers while fathers enforce order.***

Instead, we are building a different inheritance—one rooted in ***truth, safety, tenderness, accountability, apology, and staying present.*** We are raising children who know they can bring their whole selves, be met with care, and learn that love is not control, but a commitment to show up, repair, and keep showing up.

What they refuse to pass down

We refuse to hand our children fear, silence, shame, contempt, or violence. We choose truth, safety, tenderness, boundaries, accountability, and love.

The most radical inheritance may be a father who knows how to stay.

Community Spotlight





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A SAFE SPACE TO BLOOM, GROW & BELONG –

for everyone.

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BLOOM
A SAFE SPACE TO BLOOM, GROW & BELONG –
for everyone.





Beyond Dating

BLOOM LGBTQ+ — An Interview with Founders Lenie Maré and Ninna Andersson

Lenie Maré & Ninna Andersson
FOUNDERS, BLOOM LGBTQ+

A community app built around friendship, chosen family, emotional wellbeing, and belonging.

From South Africa and Sweden — almost 10,000 kilometres apart — came an unexpected love story. What began as two lives on opposite sides of the world grew into a deep partnership in life, love, and purpose. Today, Lenie Maré and Ninna Andersson are the founders of **Bloom LGBTQ+**, a vibrant, heart-led app created from a shared dream: to help *LGBTQ+* people everywhere find connection, community, and a true sense of belonging.



When Connection Becomes a Mission



From 10,000 Kilometres Apart to One Shared Dream

A TikTok connection on **7 December 2025** sparked a friendship between Lenie Maré in South Africa and Ninna Andersson in Sweden. What began as two lives on opposite sides of the world soon grew into love — and a shared mission to create **Bloom LGBTQ+**, a safe, welcoming space that goes beyond dating, rooted in friendship, chosen family, safety, belonging, and emotional wellbeing.

> *"We didn't start with a dating question. We started with a loneliness question."*

How Bloom Was Born

Their long-distance relationship became both a beautiful adventure and a powerful teacher. The distance, the late-night talks, the time zones, and the deep sense of finding "home" in each other made one thing clear: connection matters — in *all* its forms. Bloom grew from a desire to create something beyond dating, a community where LGBTQ+ people can find friendship, chosen family, safety, belonging, and genuine emotional wellbeing.

A Simple, Powerful Belief

Both Lenie and Ninna believe that kindness and genuine connection can change lives. Bloom is their way of turning that belief into something real — a warm, inclusive space where people can meet, feel seen, feel safe, and grow together.

A Little Q&A with Lenie & Ninna

Q: What first brought you together?

A: TikTok! We met on 7 December 2025. It started as a conversation, grew into a close friendship, and before long... it was love.

Q: How did your relationship inspire Bloom?

A: Being in a long-distance relationship taught us how vital real connection, support, and belonging are — and how many people in our community are looking for the same.

Q: What makes Bloom different?

A: It's not just about dating. It's about friendship, chosen family, safety, and emotional wellbeing — a space to bloom in your own way, at your own pace.

Meet the Founders



Lenie Maré

A South African soft-butch lesbian, writer, entrepreneur, and dreamer.



Ninna Andersson

A late-bloomer lesbian from southern Sweden, a mother of two adult children, and someone who values honesty, loyalty, and everyday expressions of love.



BLOOM

More Than Dating— A Place to Belong



Inside Bloom

BLOOM
A SAFE SPACE TO BLOOM, GROW & BELONG – for everyone.

More Than Dating, By Design

An LGBTQ+ app built for friendship, chosen family, emotional wellbeing, and connection.

Bloom isn't just a dating app — it's a vibrant, heart-led community where LGBTQ+ people can find friendship, support, chosen family, shared interests, and (if they want it) romance too. You set the pace, choose what you're here for, and connect in ways that feel good and authentic.



Bloom Compass
Find your people. Explore what you're looking for – love, friendship, chosen family, or community.

Bloom Mind
A wellbeing space with gentle prompts, grounding tools, and support for everyday life.

Friendship
Meet kind, like-minded people, share interests, and build real friendships.

Willow
A calm, caring companion for reflection, encouragement, and emotional support.

Chosen Family
Connect with mentors, siblings, aunties, elders, and the wider LGBTQ+ family you choose.

Petal Translate
Connect across borders with translation in 30+ languages – so more of us can belong.

Community
Join affirming spaces, take part in creative prompts (like poetry), and be part of a supportive, welcoming community.

Bloom Garden
Plant flowers for milestones and memories, celebrate growth, and mark what matters to you.

Your Safety Comes First

- ✓ **Report** – flag harmful or inappropriate behaviour.
- ✓ **Block** – stop unwanted contact, anytime.
- ✓ **Moderation** – active, ongoing review to keep Bloom a safe, respectful space.
- ✓ **Stealth Mode** – keep a lower profile and have more control over your visibility.

Dating Is Optional

You can explore romance if it feels right — but Bloom is so much more. Friendship, community, wellbeing, and belonging are at the heart of it.

> *"Nobody should have to say, 'I'm not looking for romance — I'm just looking for my people,' and feel out of place."*

Lenie Maré & Ninna Andersson
FOUNDERS, BLOOM LGBTQ+

Bloom Quick Take

- 18+ community
- Android live
- Apple launch goal
- Translation across 30+ languages



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What Bloom Hopes to Grow Next

The launch of Bloom was just the beginning. Our hope is to keep growing a safer, kinder and more connected place for LGBTQ+ people around the world.



Our Next Chapter

Right now, our focus is on:

- **Bringing Bloom to Apple,** so even more people can join.
- **Building local community density,** with vibrant, active circles in more places.
- **Strengthening safety and moderation,** to keep Bloom a trusted and affirming space.
- **Expanding wellbeing support,** with more practical tools, resources and gentle daily care.
- **Continuing thoughtful development,** shaped by real community feedback and lived experience.

Launched on Google Play!

Bloom officially launched on Google Play on **25 July 2026!**

What Will Always Guide Us

No matter how Bloom grows, it will always be guided by: ***safety, privacy, dignity, inclusion, kindness*** and ***meaningful connection.***

Let's Grow This Together

We're actively seeking partnerships with nonprofits, mental-health organizations, Pride groups, publications and local LGBTQ+ communities who share our vision for a safer, more caring and more connected world. If you'd like to collaborate, we'd love to hear from you!

A Message from Us

"Bloom has always been about people — real people, real stories, real connection. We're so grateful for everyone who's already joined, shared, supported and believed in this vision. The road ahead is big, and we're excited, because we're building it together — with care, with purpose, and with so much love."

With love,
Lenie Maré & Ninna Andersson
FOUNDERS, BLOOM LGBTQ+

Connect With Bloom

Join the Bloom community, follow our journey, support the work, and help us grow!

Get Bloom on Google Play
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bloomlgbtq.app

Support Bloom's Growth (Fundraiser)
https://whydonate.com/fundraising/help-us-build-bloom-a-better-social-space-for-the-lgbtq-community

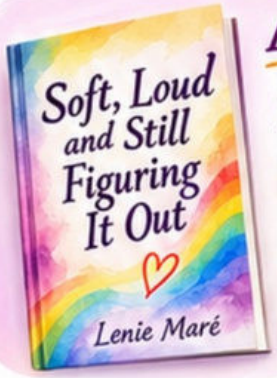
All Bloom Links & Updates (Linktree)
https://linktr.ee/bloomlgbtq

Instagram: @bloomlgbtq
https://www.instagram.com/bloomlgbtq/

YouTube: @BloomLGBTQ
https://www.youtube.com/@BloomLGBTQ

Get in Touch
bloomlgbtq143@gmail.com

Lenie's Book

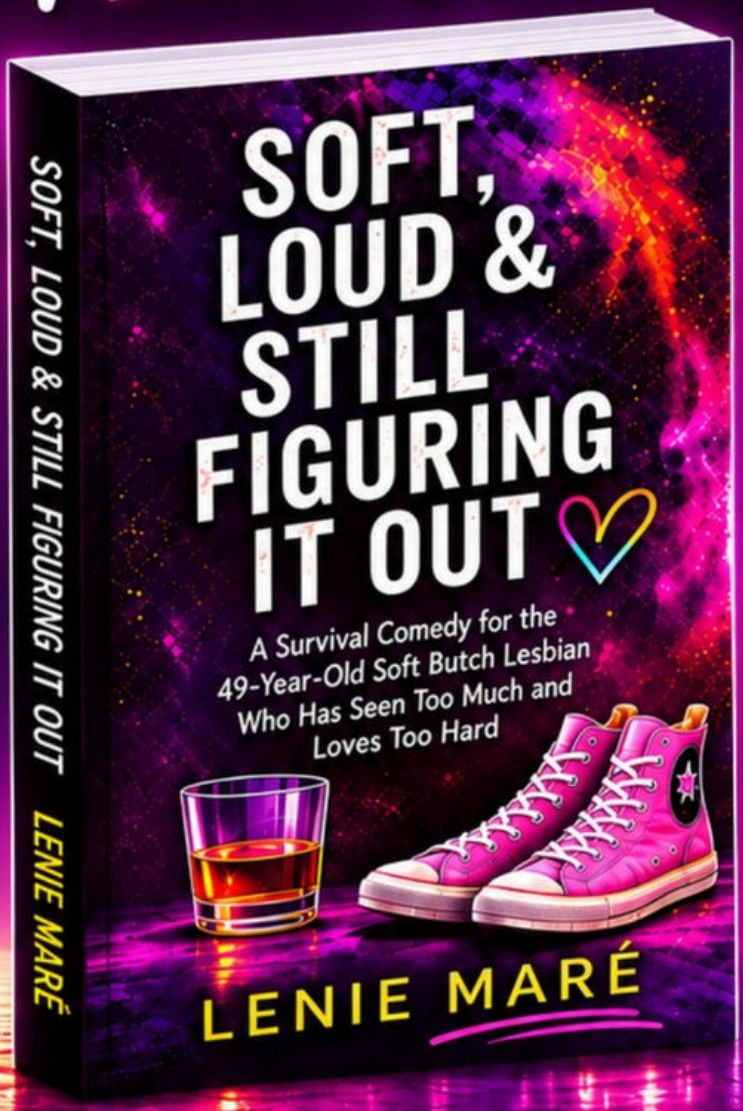


Soft, Loud and Still Figuring It Out

Lenie Maré's honest, heartfelt book about identity, love, healing and the beautifully messy journey of finding home in yourself.

> *"No matter how much Bloom grows, it must never lose heart."*

Finally: A Book That Gets It.



A hilarious, honest, and heartfelt journey through love, labels, faith, family, and finding yourself at 49.

- ☑ Real stories.
- ☑ Big laughs.
- ☑ Zero shame.
- ☑ Maximum honesty.

GET YOUR EBOOK NOW ON Etsy

Courageous Love Collective
MAGAZINE

Resource File

Protect What You Built

A starting checklist for parentage documents, guardianship, emergency records, mental-health support and family digital-safety planning.

Families do not stay protected by love alone. They stay protected by paperwork, planning, honest conversations, and the systems we build before a crisis arrives.



Inside this resource file: parentage documents • guardianship • emergency records • mental-health support • digital-safety planning

Resource File

Start With the Legal Foundation

Parentage documents and guardianship planning are not pessimistic. They are how families reduce confusion when stress hits.



A strong legal foundation gives your family clarity, stability, and options when life is unpredictable. Take time to gather and review the key documents that show your legal relationship to your child and spell out who can make decisions if you are unavailable.

Start by locating your parentage judgment(s) or adoption order(s), along with your child's birth certificate(s). If you are married, include your marriage certificate. If any custody orders exist—such as from a prior relationship or blended-family situation—keep current copies on hand. Consider powers of attorney when appropriate, such as for temporary caregiving, medical decisions, or school matters. Finally, create clear standby or temporary guardianship instructions that name trusted adult(s), outline your preferences, and are consistent with your state law.

Pull first

- Birth certificates
- Adoption decrees or parentage judgments
- Marriage certificate or partnership records, if relevant
- Custody or visitation orders, if any
- Emergency contact sheet for school and caregivers

Guardianship conversation

Choose trusted adults who know and love your child. Have an open conversation about your family's values, routines, and your child's needs, including school, health care, and daily life. Keep your written instructions updated as your family and circumstances change.

Courageous Love Collective
MAGAZINE

Resource File

Build the Emergency File Before You Need It

A simple, organized emergency file keeps essential information at your fingertips when life is unexpected — so you can focus on your family, not on searching for papers, numbers, or instructions in the middle of a crisis.

An organized file cannot stop a crisis, but it can slow the panic.



An emergency file is a central, ready-to-go set of important information about your family. It brings together the essentials you might need quickly in a medical emergency, a sudden school issue, or any situation when another adult needs to step in. Keep it in a labeled binder or accordion file in a known, accessible place, and review it regularly to keep it current.

Emergency file checklist

- Insurance cards and policy numbers
- Medication list and allergy information
- Pediatrician, therapist, and pharmacy contacts
- School, childcare, and after-school information
- Copies of identification and key legal papers
- Who to call first if a parent cannot be reached

Resource File

Protect the Parent, Too

Families need paperwork, but they also need plans for burnout, grief, anxiety, and isolation.

Normalize this

Fathers do not have to wait until they are in crisis to create support plans.



Preparing for your family's well-being means protecting your own, too. Fathers and caregivers often carry a lot—navigating paperwork, supporting their children, and managing the emotional weight that comes with it. A practical support plan can help you stay grounded and resilient through the ups and downs of family life.

Start by identifying trusted mental-health contacts you can reach out to when you need support. Know what your insurance covers for counseling or therapy, and keep a list of preferred therapists or clinics that fit your family's needs. Build a respite plan, too—arrange for childcare or extra help so you can rest, recharge, or attend an appointment. Most importantly, treat emotional support as a core part of your family's preparedness, not a last resort.

Mental-health support plan

- Two people I can call when I am overwhelmed
- My therapist, clinic, or preferred mental-health provider
- Insurance information and crisis resources
- Who can help with childcare if I need rest or an appointment
- Daily warning signs that tell me I need support sooner

Resource File

Finish With Digital Safety and One Master Checklist

Close the loop on your family's protection plan with simple, practical steps for accounts, privacy, and ongoing updates.

Keep your family's digital life secure, private, and up to date—so the people you love, and the information that matters, stay protected in everyday life and in a crisis.



Store passwords securely, decide who can access family accounts in emergencies, review school and photo-sharing permissions, protect your children's personal information, and keep your device, cloud, and emergency contacts updated.

Family digital-safety planning

- ☐ Password manager or secure password record
- ☐ Emergency access plan for devices and key accounts
- ☐ Privacy review for school portals and photo-sharing
- ☐ Backup copies of essential documents
- ☐ Updated family contact list stored in two places

If you do only five things this month

1. Gather legal parentage papers,
2. Name and brief emergency caregivers
3. Build one family emergency file
4. Write down mental-health supports
5. Review digital access and privacy settings

Protection is not only what we feel for our families. It is what we prepare for them.

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WHAT'S HOT
IN QUEER CULTURE

NOVEMBER 2026 | ENTERTAINMENT • SPORTS • LITERATURE

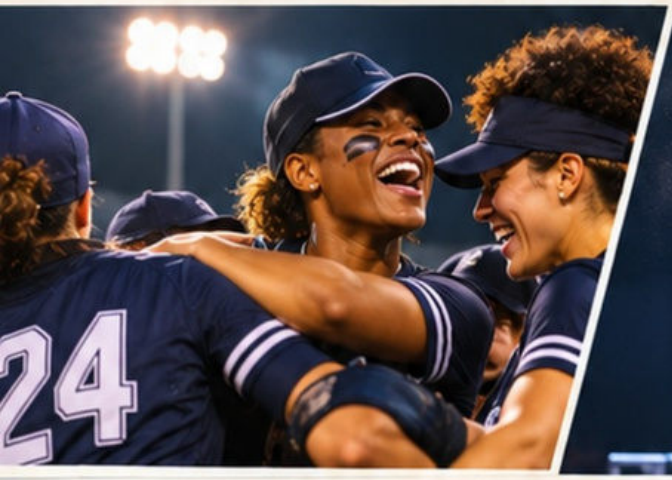
ENTERTAINMENT

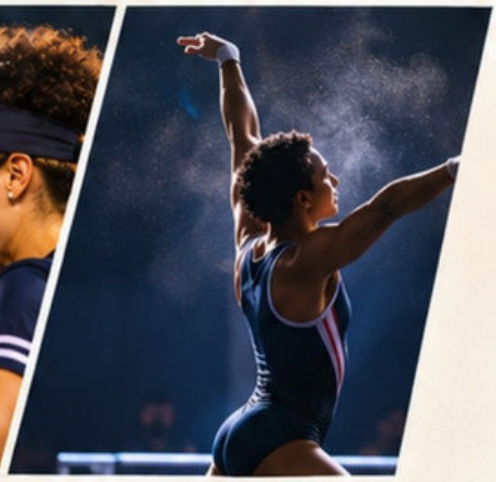
CLUB KID
Jordan Firstman's queer fatherhood film. In theaters Nov. 6.

THE BODY
Queer-created supernatural horror from Quinn Shephard. Netflix, Nov. 11.









SPORTS

L.A. QUEENS MAKE HISTORY
Inaugural Women's Pro Baseball League champions; a season of queer visibility.

EDDIE PENEV
Out gay gymnast joins Air Force Academy as assistant women's gymnastics coach.

LITERATURE

AND IF I DIE BEFORE I WAKE
George M. Johnson's new memoir, out Nov. 10.

THE DRAKON KING
Terry J. Benton-Walker's queer fantasy romance, out Nov. 10.





Culture moves forward when our stories are seen.

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THE LAST WORD

What I Want My Children to *Remember*

A final reflection from Tyson Pete about presence, accountability, healing and the legacy a father leaves behind.

BY TYSON PETE





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Presence Is a *Practice*

The love children remember is often the love they could count on in ordinary moments.



What presence looks like

- Listening without rushing
- Following through
- Being emotionally available
- Turning ordinary moments into safe memories

> *"Presence is love made visible in real time."*

Presence is more than proximity. It is attention, consistency, and the decision to keep showing up, especially when life is noisy, demanding, or imperfect. Children may forget some of what we buy, but they remember how we made them feel when they needed us most.

I want my children to remember the ordinary faithfulness of fatherhood: the rides, the check-ins, the laughter, the listening, and the way I tried to make home feel safe. Presence is built in repeated moments, not only milestone memories.

Being present does not require perfection. It requires intention. It means putting down distraction, noticing what is happening beneath the surface, and letting our children know they matter enough to be fully seen.

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THE LAST WORD • TYSON PETE

The Freedom I Hope They *Inherit*

More than success, I want my children to inherit self-worth, tenderness, and the courage to be fully themselves.

Legacy is not only financial, professional, or public. The deepest inheritance can be internal: self-respect, emotional honesty, courage, and the freedom to live without shrinking. Those are the gifts I want to leave behind.

I want my children to know they do not have to betray themselves to be loved. They do not have to perform strength, silence their tenderness, or hide the parts of themselves that make other people uncomfortable. Home should never require self-erasure.

If they carry anything from me into adulthood, I hope it is this: you are worthy now. You can tell the truth about who you are. You can build relationships rooted in safety. And you can choose a future wider than the fears you inherited.

> *"The best legacy is not pressure to become impressive. It is permission to become whole."*

WHAT I HOPE THEY KEEP

- Self-worth
- Compassion
- Emotional honesty
- Courage
- Freedom



Healing Is Part of the *Legacy*

The work a father does on himself can become protection for the children who come after him.

Healing can include

- Therapy or coaching
- Rest and boundaries
- Naming old pain
- Learning emotional language
- Choosing support over silence

> *"Sometimes the bravest thing a father does is heal loudly enough that his children never have to inherit the same silence."*

Healing is not separate from fatherhood. It is part of it. A father who examines his pain, unlearns harmful patterns, and asks for help is not stepping away from his responsibility—he is taking it more seriously.

Many parents carry wounds they did not choose: grief, shame, fear, abandonment, religious trauma, or the pressure to survive without softness. If those wounds go unnamed, they often shape the home anyway. Healing helps interrupt that inheritance.

I want my children to remember not only what I taught them, but what I was willing to confront in myself. Therapy, reflection, rest, and honesty are not weaknesses. They are the labor of becoming safer for the people we love.



Heal. Grow. Protect. Repeat.

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THE LAST WORD • TYSON PETE

Accountability Is *Love in Action*

> *"A father's apology can become one of a child's first lessons in dignity."*

Children learn integrity not only from what we say, but from how we repair.



Accountability is one of the deepest forms of love a parent can offer. It teaches children that strength and humility can live in the same person. When fathers apologize, tell the truth, and make repairs, they break cycles that often survive in silence.

I want my children to remember that I was willing to own my part. Not to perform guilt, but to model responsibility. Accountability says: I am still growing, and I care enough about our relationship to do better.

Too many of us were raised to believe authority meant never admitting fault. But children do not need a flawless father. They need a trustworthy one—someone whose words and actions keep moving closer together.

What repair can sound like

- *I was wrong.*
- *You did not deserve that.*
- *I am sorry.*
- *I will work to do this differently.*

The Last Word *Is Love*

What I want my children to remember most is simple: they were loved deeply, protected fiercely, and raised with purpose.



If my children remember anything clearly, I hope they remember love—not sentimental love, but steady love. The kind that stays, repairs, learns, and keeps choosing them again and again.

I hope they remember that I tried to build more than a household. I tried to build safety. I tried to create a place where they could breathe, grow, and know that being loved did not require becoming less of themselves.

And when they speak of me years from now, I hope they do not measure my life only by titles or work. I hope they remember presence. Accountability. Healing. Laughter. Faith. The courage to keep becoming. That is the father I wanted to be.

> *"More than anything, I want my children to remember that they were **loved deeply, protected fiercely, and raised with purpose.**"*

Tyson Pete

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Thank You

TO OUR READERS

FOR A YEAR OF

Courageous Love Collective

Your support, readership, shared stories, and unwavering commitment to LGBTQ+ families have made this year extraordinary.

Together, we've amplified queer fatherhood, celebrated our families, told our truths, and created a space where ***representation truly feels like recognition.***

From our family to yours — thank you for being part of this courageous community.

The Courageous Love Collective Team

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QUEER FATHERHOOD: *HELP IS HERE*

Current services, support networks & resources for gay, queer and trans fathers and fathers-to-be.



BUILDING YOUR FAMILY

Family Equality
familyequality.org/resources
Guides for adoption, fostering, surrogacy, grants and LGBTQ+ family protections.

GWK Academy
gwkacademy.org
Free LGBTQ+ family-building education, mentors and adoption/surrogacy guidance.

Men Having Babies
menhavingbabies.org
Gay fatherhood surrogacy education and Gay Parenting Assistance Program grants/ discounts.

FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Pop Luck Club
popluckclub.org
Gay dads and prospective fathers: peer community and meetings in Southern California.

Rainbow Families
rainbowfamilies.org/support-groups
Virtual peer groups for new, single, trans and other LGBTQ+ parents.

COLAGE
colage.org/resources
Resources and community for children and adults with LGBTQ+ parents.

RIGHTS & ADVOCACY

Lambda Legal
lambdalegal.org/issues/family-protections
LGBTQ+ family-rights information and legal Help Desk.

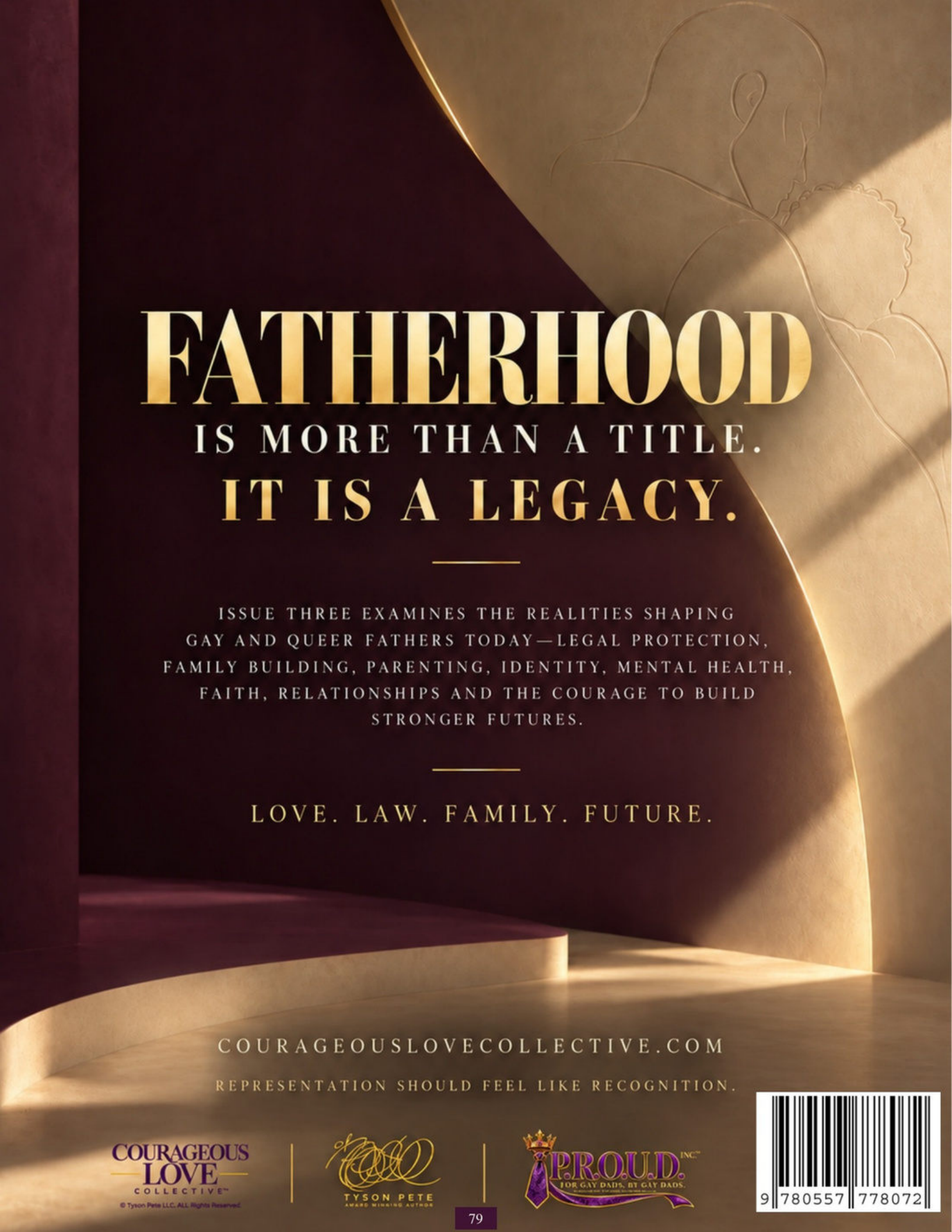
National Center for LGBTQ Rights
nclrights.org/get-help
Family-law legal information and helpline: 800-528-6257.

PFLAG
pflag.org/find-resources
Local chapters and support for LGBTQ+ people and families.

MENTAL HEALTH & IMMEDIATE HELP

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
988lifeline.org
Free, confidential support in the U.S., 24/7;
CALL OR TEXT 988.
You do not have to be suicidal to reach out.

You do not have to navigate fatherhood alone.


FATHERHOOD
IS MORE THAN A TITLE.
IT IS A LEGACY.
ISSUE THREE EXAMINES THE REALITIES SHAPING GAY AND QUEER FATHERS TODAY—LEGAL PROTECTION, FAMILY BUILDING, PARENTING, IDENTITY, MENTAL HEALTH, FAITH, RELATIONSHIPS AND THE COURAGE TO BUILD STRONGER FUTURES.
LOVE. LAW. FAMILY. FUTURE.
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