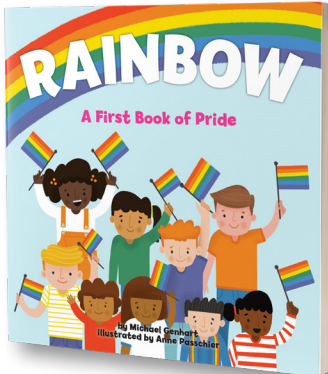




## Rainbow Families and Colorful Mindfulness



Dr. Michael Genhart, author of *Rainbow: A First Book of Pride*, explores rainbows, rainbow families, and shares why he created a book about LGBTQ+ pride for young children.

You can purchase *Rainbow: A First Book of Pride* with 20% off and free domestic shipping [here](#). Enter code **MPKIDS20** at checkout.

*Rainbow: A First Book of Pride* links rainbows (who doesn't love seeing a rainbow?!) to the rainbow flag (which we see throughout the world) and to rainbow families. LGBTQ+ families with two moms, two dads, one mom or dad, transgender parents, and parents of color are everywhere! The flag is a celebration of pride during LGBTQ+ Pride Month especially, but it's also an invitation to feel proud of who you are and proud of your family all year long. *Rainbow* is a book for ALL families who stand up for inclusion, equality, and positivity. Children grow up in all kinds of families, and every child should feel free to shout out the pride they feel for her family, regardless of its composition.

Books and children go together. While access to books can vary, it is my hope that we are moving toward increasing accessibility of books for all children. And when children pick up books to read, it is important that they see themselves and their families reflected on the pages. Nothing is more delightful than hearing, "That's me!" or "That's my family!" from a child who recognizes herself in a story. Not only does this encourage further reading, but it also allows a child to relate to important messages contained in the storylines. Parents also light up at the sight of seeing their child engaged with a book. Their investment in books only grows when those books serve as mirrors of their own experience as a family.

I decided to write *Rainbow* because, as a gay dad, there were very few picture books showing LGBTQ+ families when my daughter was young. I wanted to create a book that showed rainbow families going about their lives just like every other family. And Gilbert Baker's original rainbow flag was turning 40 (1978-2018), so it was timely to show kids just what the different colors of the flag mean. I also wanted to join in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots (1969-2019), which started as a protest and evolved into a celebration of queer pride.

As a child and adult clinical psychologist, I also wrote *Rainbow* because after 30 years in practice, I continue to hear too many stories of LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing some form of teasing and/or discrimination. We simply need more children's books depicting LGBTQ+ families in order to help reduce prejudice and increase total acceptance.

While *Rainbow* may look like a book only for LGBTQ+ families, my intention is for ALL kinds of families to enjoy it. In American schools today, LGBTQ+ families are part of the community. While the reception of these families may be generally warm, unfortunately, this is not always the case—and both children and parents can feel this exclusion. *Rainbow* is intended to be a helpful and kind way to introduce queer families to ALL parents and schools, particularly those who have not shared in the community together. Many of us live in a very diverse world, and celebrating this diversity is an essential part of our lives. But for those of us who may not live among families who are different from our own, this book is also an opportunity to celebrate LGBTQ+ families as another kind of normal.

*Rainbow* is my first book for very young children (3+)—though it is my hope that adults to 99+ will also enjoy it! It is written in simple text for little ones, but the bigger message is one of inclusivity—a topic I hope all parents, grandparents, caregivers, and teachers who share this book with the children in their lives will amplify in continuous conversations. Anne Passchier's illustrations captured the joy of LGBTQ+ parents loving their children and those children loving their parents. I felt honored to work with Anne, and through our editor at Magination Press, Kristine Enderle, we worked together to fine-tune the artwork to highlight each rainbow flag color and showcase queer families in all of their beauty!

After sharing *Rainbow* with children, I hope that some will see rainbows differently—just like in this book, linking them to the rainbow flag and to rainbow families. In the spirit of bringing more mindfulness into daily practice with our children, maybe some children and parents will even pause and recall what the red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet colors of the rainbow flag mean. Red is life, orange is healing, yellow is sunlight, green is nature, blue is harmony, and violet is spirit. Wouldn't that be a beautiful moment? And in the same vein, maybe the book will encourage the appreciation that the flag itself stands for such beautiful values as inclusion, acceptance, and diversity. I would be beyond tickled if, after reading *Rainbow*, some children smile a big ol' smile the next time they meet a rainbow family... feeling at a deeper level that love is love across all families.

### This Article's Author

Michael Genhart, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in San Francisco. He is the acclaimed author of many picture books, including *Love is Love; I See You; Ouch! Moments; So Many Smarts!; Cake & I Scream!; Mac & Geez!; Peanut Butter & Jellyous*, among other titles. He lives with his rainbow family in Marin County, California.