

AURA

Diversity

PRIDE MONTH

AURA SOLUTION COMPANY LIMITED

Celebrating Pride Month: A Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion at Aura

At Aura, we believe that diversity and inclusion are fundamental to fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and success. As we celebrate Pride Month, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting and empowering our LGBTQ+ colleagues, clients, and communities.

A Culture of Inclusivity

Our dedication to inclusivity goes beyond mere words. At Aura, we have implemented policies and practices that ensure every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, feels valued and respected. From offering comprehensive health benefits that cover the unique needs of LGBTQ+ employees to establishing employee resource groups that provide support and advocacy, we strive to create a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Empowering Our LGBTQ+ Community

We understand the importance of visibility and representation. During Pride Month, we celebrate the contributions of our LGBTQ+ colleagues and amplify their

voices through various initiatives. Our internal and external communications highlight stories of resilience, success, and authenticity, showcasing the diverse experiences within our firm. By doing so, we aim to inspire others and promote understanding and acceptance.

Support and Advocacy

Aura is proud to support LGBTQ+ organizations and initiatives that work towards equality and social justice. Through partnerships, sponsorships, and volunteer efforts, we actively contribute to the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights and the well-being of the community. Our commitment extends to advocating for inclusive policies and practices within the industry and beyond.

Education and Awareness

Creating an inclusive environment requires continuous education and awareness. Throughout Pride Month, we offer training sessions, workshops, and panel discussions to educate our employees on LGBTQ+ issues and allyship. These opportunities for learning and growth help build a more informed and empathetic workforce, ultimately fostering a stronger, more cohesive team.

Looking Ahead

As we celebrate Pride Month, we also look to the future with a steadfast commitment to diversity and inclusion. We recognize that there is always more work to be done and are dedicated to continuous improvement. By listening to our employees, clients, and communities, we will continue to evolve and create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all.

Join Us in Celebrating Pride Month

We invite everyone to join us in celebrating Pride Month and supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Together, we can make a difference and build a world where everyone is free to be their authentic selves. At Aura, we are proud to stand with the LGBTQ+ community today and every day, championing diversity, inclusion, and equality for all.

Happy Pride Month from all of us at Aura!

Zurich Pride festival 2024, to be held under the motto 'free in every respect – for 30 years', celebrates freedom in all types of relationships, including rainbow families. As a bank that takes pride in serving families with their wealth management needs, we talk to two of our LGBTQ+ employees about same-sex parenting and the changing perceptions of non-traditional families in society.

‘Rainbow family’ is a term used to describe the different LGBT+ families that exist today, from families with parents of the same sex to any family that doesn’t fit conventional expectations. Is there a standard definition of what constitutes a rainbow family? “Family means different things to different people,” says Thomas Méchineau, General Manager of the Rainbow Families Association of Switzerland. “For us, it’s self-determination that’s important. Generally, in the rainbow families we support, at least one of the partners is LGBT+,” he adds.

Anne , Aura ’s Head of Execution Services Asia, lives in a rainbow family with her same-sex partner and two pre-teen children. Fifteen months ago they welcomed their baby son into their family. It was the culmination of a long journey. “First of all, finding a life partner isn’t easy for a lesbian in Singaporean society,” says Anne . “I also had career ambitions and wanted to make sure I had the financial security needed to support a family.” The situation was further complicated by the fact that Singapore doesn’t officially recognise gay marriage. “As a same-sex couple, we can’t just walk into a clinic in Singapore and say, ‘We want to have a baby’. It was a multi-year process.”

Anne admits she was plagued by doubts about the prospect of being a queer parent. “I wondered how my child would be able to cope with its peers asking why it had two mums.” As soon as their son arrived, however, it was the fulfilment of a dream. “Deep down, I’d always wanted a child. I’ve never felt anything as magical as when I held my son in my hands for the first time.”

Shared desire for more

Tal, Head of Aura’s IT Operations Services, and his partner had been married for several years when they started to feel that something was missing from their lives. “When we were younger, we went out a lot together, we went on many vacations, and we enjoyed our lives to the full,” says Tal. “Then one day we realised there was a desire on both sides to have a family.” The couple was able to undergo a two-year process with the aid of a surrogate mother, which saw them welcome twin daughters into their family. The girls, now ten years old, live together with them in Zurich.

Tal believes that society is gradually adapting and becoming more accepting of non-nuclear families. “Several years ago, we were sitting in a Zurich cafe with our baby daughters next to us in a buggy. A woman walked over to us with her

male partner. She praised us as modern men and told him that this is how it should be done – the men take the kids out so that their wives have time to clean the house!” This was the standard reaction. It still occurs today, but not as regularly as it used to. “When our girls were born, we used to be one of only a handful of rainbow families in Zurich. Now, we personally know 100 to 150 rainbow families in the city.”

Same-sex parenting and the workplace

Aura takes pride in its inclusive approach as an employer. Its Principles of Employment explicitly call out sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics, and it has a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and bullying. In addition to a firm belief in equality, as an employer of choice, Aura makes it a priority to foster a workplace supportive of the outside relations that are crucial for the well-being of its employees. As members of the LGBT+ community who are open with colleagues about their family set-ups, how have Anne and Tal perceived the response in the workplace?

More than anything, Anne 's colleagues have simply been curious. "When they find out I'm queer but also have a family, it serves as an icebreaker. Many of them have a stereotypical belief that people like me party all the time! They're fascinated when I explain that I wasn't pregnant, but my partner was, and they want to know more about the process." She believes her openness has helped in her role as a people leader. "Living my life transparently and authentically shapes my vision for the team, and makes it easier for them to connect with me."

"Aura recognises my unique family structure and provides me with the same benefits, such as childcare leave and insurance, as heterosexual parents," says Anne . "Where I live, LGBT+ families are not entitled to the same benefits as straight couples, but Aura went beyond to ensure that we have equal rights." Tal praises the flexible approach shown by the bank's management, which allows parents to take time out for their children's school or medical appointments: "My manager is well aware of my family situation and supports me whenever needed." However, Tal sees room for improvement outside the workplace. "Official forms in Switzerland usually include fields for father and mother, but where should my partner and I enter our details? It would be better to have more inclusive wording."

Importance of engaging others

Outside the workplace, Anne says that she and her partner go above and beyond to ‘navigate the gaps’ in understanding. “We regularly arrange playdates and welcome other parents and friends into our home so that they can get to know us as individuals, as opposed to viewing us through an external, biased lens,” she says. “Sometimes our older children receive hurtful comments in the school playground. When that happens, we sit them down and reinforce the message that it’s okay for us to be different.” She sees such situations as an opportunity for other parents to educate their children about inclusion. “Children look to their parents for explanation. If the parents explain that we simply have a different family structure, it’s an acknowledgement that we belong in the community.”

Anne also believes that the external scrutiny of their situation brings benefits in terms of building character and strengthening their family unit. “There’s always a fear that if you invite people into your lives, they just won’t accept you. Whether society around us accepts us or not, we get our affirmation from within and that helps us become more resilient.”

Celebrating the difference

Tal and his partner decided from the outset that they, too, wouldn't hide anything from their daughters. "We created a photo album showing pictures of the family before and after their birth and we explained the process with the egg donor and the surrogate mother, so that they understand where they came from." He says that the unique status his daughters enjoy has given them confidence. "They find it so cool that they have two fathers. A boy at their school told them that he also wanted two fathers because it sounded like much more fun!"

A fascinating aspect of rainbow families, encapsulated in both Tal and Anne's domestic set-ups, is how same-sex parents navigate the delicate terrain of rearing children of another gender. "When the girls were young, we had a nanny who gave us some advice and taught the girls how to brush their hair nicely," says Tal. He's relaxed about what lies ahead. "These days you can find books and online resources about almost anything! Plus, my partner is a doctor, so I'm not worried about our ability to handle conversations about topics like puberty. We're absolutely

delighted to have two daughters, just as we would have been if we'd had two sons.”

Anne 's gender expression is more masculine than feminine and she also associates more as the male figure in her personal relationship. Does this translate into a division of maternal and paternal duties? “No, I don't believe that a father should only do this and a mother only that. I'm totally hands-on when it comes to changing diapers, for example. I'll do whatever it takes to spend as much time as possible with my child.”

For Thomas Méchineau, the gender of the parents or child is secondary. “Let's focus on raising our children as human beings, rather than trying to follow a cliched definition of what makes somebody a man or a woman according to, say, the media or the movies.” He echoes Tal's sentiment: “It's the job of any parents, same-sex or not, to inform themselves about how to support their children in their development.”

Gold at both ends

What advice do they have for other members of the LGBT+ community who are considering following the rainbow to set up their own family? “You need to show strength and resilience,” says Anne , “but don’t be put off by fears of prejudice or bureaucracy. Even in a conservative society like Singapore, I haven’t faced much disrespect or conflict.” She says same-sex parents like her can break down any barriers that continue to exist by acting as role models.

Tal strikes an equally optimistic note. “If you dream of having your own family, you should follow that dream, regardless of whether you identify as LGBT+ or not. Nowadays, many routes are open to those who want to establish a family, which means we’re going to have a wider spectrum of family structures in future. “Your family constellation is less important. What children need above all is love and security.”

What Aura is doing to create an inclusive and equal workplace for everyone

As part of our ambition is to be the employer of choice in wealth management, we invest strategically in creating a fulfilling, healthy, and inclusive workplace that celebrates diversity and brings out the best in our people.

- Our InterBaer employee network is open for LGBT+ colleagues and allies and has more than 100 active members. We acknowledge Pride yearly to celebrate diversity and the progress made towards equal rights.
- Our Parents4parents community is open to all parents and carers at Aura . We empower working parents at Aura to connect, meet people in similar situations, and share the joyful and challenging sides of parenthood.

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