

or a condemnation of the way you were raised. You are still your parents' child, still a loving sibling, and that has not changed even though you may now have some differences in philosophy. You still respect their beliefs and choices, and you assume that they will have the same respect for you.

Being an atheist doesn't mean that you can't be there for important family events and traditions. You may not pray, but you can still attend a wedding at a church or synagogue. You may not worship Jesus, but you can still join them for Christmas dinner.

The hardest thing to deal with may be your family's worry that, as an atheist, you will be condemned by God or damned in the afterlife. Here there is not much you can say in the way of comfort, other than to point out that a just and loving God could not blame you for using the mind that He gave you.

To download additional tracts or purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit [blog.iamanatheist.com](http://blog.iamanatheist.com)

dormitory and tell your family that you're an atheist now, they may be inclined to blame your change on "corrupting" influences instead of crediting you with having come to a reasoned conclusion.

Of course, in some unfortunate situations, you may not be able to take it slow. Although anyone secure in their beliefs should be comfortable with examining them, some people consider doubts about religion to be rude, unspeakable, sinful, or even blasphemous. In that kind of situation, you may have to move quickly to the next step: showing your family what atheism isn't.

Some religious people associate atheism with immorality or with a rejection of God that leaves no accountability for indulging carnal desires. If your family falls into this group, you can reassure them that you are still the same good, honest, moral person you always were, but that now you are moral because it is the right thing to do, not because you fear eternal punishment.

You may also need to reassure your family that your change in philosophy is in no way a "rejection" of them



# HOW DO I TELL MY FAMILY I'M AN ATHEIST?

A Question of Moral Atheism

*from [blog.iamanatheist.com](http://blog.iamanatheist.com)*



©2009 D. Cancilla. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

IF YOU WERE raised in a religious household, you may find the prospect of telling your family that you are an atheist daunting. You may worry about being yelled at, chastised, shunned, or just misunderstood. Fortunately, you can probably avoid most of this type of problem if you just take it slow.

Its best if you can share your doubts about religion with your family right from the start. Make them part of your philosophical journey — find answers to questions together, research together, share your feelings. This way, your family will be with you as your beliefs change and they won't be caught by surprise.

If this isn't possible, consider sharing your thoughts on religion with your family a little bit at a time. Ask them some of the questions that you found atheism answered best. Seriously consider and respond to their answers — perhaps you will be surprised by what they come up with.

Taking it slow is particularly important if you had a big change in philosophy while away from home. If you come back from your first year living in a college

**I**F YOU WERE raised in a religious household, you may find the prospect of telling your family that you are an atheist daunting. You may worry about being yelled at, chastised, shunned, or just misunderstood. Fortunately, you can probably avoid most of this type of problem if you just take it slow.

It's best if you can share your doubts about religion with your family right from the start. Make them part of your philosophical journey — find answers to questions together, research together, share your feelings. This way, your family will be with you as your beliefs change and they won't be caught by surprise.

If this isn't possible, consider sharing your thoughts on religion with your family a little bit at a time. Ask them some of the questions that you found atheism answered best. Seriously consider and respond to their answers — perhaps you will be surprised by what they come up with.

Taking it slow is particularly important if you had a big change in philosophy while away from home. If you come back from your first year living in a college

dormitory and tell your family that you're an atheist now, they may be inclined to blame your change on "corrupting" influences instead of crediting you with having come to a reasoned conclusion.

Of course, in some unfortunate situations, you may not be able to take it slow. Although anyone secure in their beliefs should be comfortable with examining them, some people consider doubts about religion to be rude, unspeakable, sinful, or even blasphemous. In that kind of situation, you may have to move quickly to the next step: showing your family what atheism isn't.

Some religious people associate atheism with immorality or with a rejection of God that leaves no accountability for indulging carnal desires. If your family falls into this group, you can reassure them that you are still the same good, honest, moral person you always were, but that now you are moral because it is the right thing to do, not because you fear eternal punishment.

You may also need to reassure your family that your change in philosophy is in no way a "rejection" of them



*from [blog:amaanatheist.com](http://blog:amaanatheist.com)*

A Question of Moral Atheism

## HOW DO I TELL MY FAMILY I'M AN ATHEIST?



or a condemnation of the way you were raised. You are still your parents' child, still a loving sibling, and that has not changed even though you may now have some differences in philosophy. You still respect their beliefs and choices, and you assume that they will have the same respect for you.

Being an atheist doesn't mean that you can't be there for important family events and traditions. You may not pray, but you can still attend a wedding at a church or synagogue. You may not worship Jesus, but you can still join them for Christmas dinner.

The hardest thing to deal with may be your family's worry that, as an atheist, you will be condemned by God or damned in the afterlife. Here there is not much you can say in the way of comfort, other than to point out that a just and loving God could not blame you for using the mind that He gave you.

# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

---

We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

---