

Parents and Caregivers: Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Youth

If you are a parent or caregiver, and a young person in your life or family has recently come out as trans, you may be struggling with a lot of complicated and conflicting emotions. You are likely some combination of scared, surprised, and confused.

These tips were created to help guide you in your initial steps, so that you can support the trans loved ones in your life.

What matters most: If your child has come out as trans, what they need most right now is unreserved reassurance. Reassurance that you still love them, that you support them, and that you will always be there for them. While you may need time to process this change, your first step should be to affirm to your child that you love and support them. Many trans children are scared to come out, and this is a big moment for them, for you, and for your family.

Consider thanking your child for trusting you with this information and reassure them that they have your support.

When your child or young person first comes out, it is important to:

1. Thank them for trusting you
2. Tell them you love and support them
3. Ask them what they need from you right now
4. Confirm what name and/or pronouns they'd like to use
5. Tell them again that you'll do your best to learn and to support them

Where Do We Go from Here?

Once a young person comes out as trans, there are a lot of things that might happen. Your

child might want to try on new clothes, change their name, switch up their pronouns, or come out to their classmates and peers. There is no single way to be trans, so you should always be patient with your child, and let them tell you what being trans means to them, and what they need from you.

I'm Having a Hard Time Handling This. What Should I Do?

Lots of parents and caregivers struggle when a child or youth comes out as trans. Your emotions, your fears, and your anxieties, are valid. It is a lot to process, and you deserve support. However, it is important that your child or young person knows that you support them. If you are struggling with their identity, it is not their responsibility to answer all your questions, or to manage your emotions.

Many communities have local 2SLGBTQ2+ organizations that can help support you as you learn to support your trans or gender diverse child.

There are also numerous resources, a list of which you can access [here](#), available to you, to help you learn more about transgender people, and how to support your trans child.

Organizations like Canadian Parents for Trans and Gender Diverse Children can also help you process your emotions, and help you learn how to best support your child.

Key Tips for Supporting your Trans or Gender Diverse Child

1. **Respect their name and pronouns:** Many trans and gender diverse children and youth will change their names and pronouns as soon as they come out. While it is an adjustment, and that adjustment can be difficult, especially if you helped choose their birth name, respecting their name and pronouns is one of the most important ways to show your support. You do not have to be perfect – and you likely will make mistakes – but trying your best and correcting yourself when you do make mistakes makes a huge difference.
2. **Educate yourself:** While you don't need to know everything about trans and gender diverse people, educating yourself on what it means to be trans, and what resources are available for trans children and youth, and their families, in your area can help you address your anxieties or uncertainty and debunk any misconceptions you may have about trans identity.
3. **Reach out for support:** You don't have to handle this alone. Many parents experience a sense of grief, based on the idea that they've 'lost' their child. You have not lost your child – your child is just growing up a bit differently than you expected. While our emotional responses are valid, it is important to remember that our children are their own people, with their own dreams, needs and identities. By reaching out for support, be it through a parent support group, a therapist, or talking with a friend, you can best process your own emotions, look out for your own mental health, and best support your child.
4. **Give your child hope:** The world isn't always easy for trans people, but it is getting better. Many parents immediately worry that their child being trans will result in lots of mistreatment. While mistreatment does happen, trans children need to know that there

is hope, that there are communities that will love and care for them, and that they can live happy and fulfilling lives as trans children and adults.

5. Don't get ahead of yourself: Trans identity isn't just about medical transition, but medical transition is an important step for many trans people. Medical transition can look a lot of different ways and mean a lot of different things. Generally speaking, medical transition for trans children and youth pertains to puberty blockers and hormone replacement therapy. These are medical practices that, respectively, either delay or kickstart puberty. To better understand what puberty might look like for your child, you should consult your family doctor or healthcare provider. Medical transition can seem scary – and it's often just as scary for trans young people. By doing your research, you can better understand what medical transition might mean for your child as they grow up.
6. Connect your child to their community: Many trans and gender diverse children feel isolated, and benefit from opportunities to connect with other trans and gender diverse young people. Many communities have drop-in programs, social opportunities, or other activities for trans, gender diverse and 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth. Not all trans and gender diverse children want or need community spaces, but many do benefit from the safety, connection, and community such spaces provide.