OUR TRANS LOVED ONES:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE

PFLAG
www.pflag.org

If you or a loved one needs immediate assistance, please turn to the inside back cover of this publication for a list of crisis helplines. Otherwise, contact us at info@pflag.org or (202) 467-8180 to find the PFLAG chapter nearest you.

ABOUT PFLAG

Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the nation's first and largest organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people, their parents and families, and allies. PFLAG has over 400 chapters and 200,000 members and supporters crossing multiple generations of families in major urban centers, small cities, and rural areas across America. This vast grassroots network is cultivated, resourced, and supported by the PFLAG National office (located in Washington, DC), the National Board of Directors, the Regional Directors Council, and many advisory councils, committees, and boards. PFLAG is a nonprofit organization not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

Our Vision. PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Our Mission. Our mission is to build on a foundation of loving families united with LGBTQ people and allies who support one another, and to educate ourselves and our communities to speak up as advocates until all hearts and minds respect, value and affirm LGBTQ people.

About this publication:

This guide focuses on providing support for families and friends of transgender and gender-expansive children, adolescents, and adults. Our experiences, expertise, knowledge, and resources continue to evolve over time, and therefore, we encourage you to check with medical, mental health, social services, and other professional providers, or local support groups—including PFLAG chapters—for the most up-to-date information on transgender and gender-expansive experiences.

Please note: The experiences of intersex young people and adults are not included in the scope of this publication. If you are seeking information specific to the intersex community, please visit the Intersex Society of North America at **isna.org**, and be sure to consult their *Tips for Parents*, found at **isna.org/articles/tips_for_parents**. Or visit Advocates for Informed Choice at **aiclegal.org**.

To order this publication, receive a complete listing of PFLAG publications, or obtain information about a PFLAG chapter in your area, visit our website at **pflag.org**.

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A NOTE FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT PFLAG NATIONAL

This publication is a place to start for those who are parents or guardians, family members, friends, or allies of people who are coming out as transgender or gender expansive.

Since PFLAG released its first transgender publication in 1995, the visibility of people who are openly transgender has grown significantly. In 2014, a transgender woman was featured on the cover of *Time*, nominated for an Emmy Award for one show and received an Emmy for another; a television show about a transgender parent was repeatedly honored by audiences and critics alike; a transgender woman became a well-respected host on a national cable news channel; and most importantly, more and more people started to have open discussions about the concept of gender and the terms used to describe it.

This new visibility is a huge positive milestone, but it doesn't change one simple fact: For many parents and guardians, family members, and friends, the news that someone they know is transgender or gender expansive can open the floodgates to a wide array of emotions, as well as create a need for resources to turn to for help and support.

That's why, in almost every corner of the country, there is PFLAG. PFLAG has a long and strong history with the transgender community; in fact, we were the first national LGBTQ organization to include people who are openly transgender in our mission statement, back in 1997. We are proud to have led the way, back in 2002, in adopting a groundbreaking policy of only supporting legislation that protects all of our families, including those who have members who are transgender and gender expansive, and in 2001 were the first to welcome a person who is transgender to our national board. Transgender inclusiveness remains a key component of PFLAG's work.

This new publication—based on our original 1995 publication, *Our Transgender Children* and our 2006 publication *Welcoming Our Trans Family and Friends*—is one such resource (others can be found on the PFLAG National website at **pflag.org**).

On the following pages you'll read insights from parents, family members, and friends. You'll hear from experts on gender at every point in a person's life—from early childhood through adulthood—and you'll learn new terminology that will help inform your understanding. This includes a term you'll see used frequently throughout this publication: "Gender expansive." Sometimes referred to as "gender nonconforming," more and more people are considering the use of the word "nonconforming" to connote negativity, as if "conforming" is the more positive norm. We have chosen, therefore, to use this newer term—"gender expansive"—as we believe that it reflects a new wave of positivity, support, understanding, and celebration we are seeing for those who are living their lives on the full spectrum of gender...or beyond it.

> ***"There are times when we struggle, because not everyone accepts [my son] as he is and still insists on referring to him as a girl. But we are getting through it."***
>
> ***—Jennifer C., 35, New Bedford, MA***

In addition to new terminology (listed in our comprehensive glossary of terms), you'll also find an extensive list of resources, and of course, unique support and education to help you embrace your transgender or gender-expansive loved one as they strive to live openly, honestly, and authentically at school, at work, at home, and beyond.

I hope you will find this revised publication an invaluable resource, refer to it often, and reach out to your local PFLAG chapter for more information on transgender issues, as well as help when you need it. Our local chapter leaders and members are available to help and, as always, provide much-needed, confidential peer-to-peer support.

PFLAG stands proudly beside all people pushing past the boundaries of binary gender identity and equally embraces those who find their best place along binary lines. There is plenty of room at the table for all of the creativity that people bring to who they are, and we're honored to support the expanse of our community's rainbow, for all people, whether LGBTQ or ally.

We hope that you enjoy this publication, its intent to provide support and education, and above all, its inclusive spirit.

Sincerely,
Your friends at PFLAG National

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

You are likely reading this publication because a loved one—your child, your sibling or parent, a friend—has shared with you that they are transgender or gender expansive. Or perhaps you have a child who appears more interested in playing with toys or dressing up in clothes that society deems more appropriate for children of a different gender, and in seeking more information you've found us through the PFLAG website.

Well, regardless of how you found PFLAG—and this publication—we're happy that you did.

Disclosures and uncertainty about gender identity and expression bring with them a wide array of emotions: Confusion, sadness, fear, surprise, disappointment, shock, anger, shame, and for some, even a feeling of relief or affirmation as they finally understand why a child may have been sad and withdrawn until allowed to dress and play in a way that felt right to them.

The most important thing to remember at this moment is that you are not alone. Your feelings, questions, and concerns are incredibly important, and thousands of other people have gone through a similar process, and experienced the same feelings that you're having now. This publication serves as a resource to help you address some of those feelings, as well as to provide information and education that will help you along the way. It also provides suggestions for how to better support your loved one—regardless of whether they are a young child, teenager, or adult—as they move through their transgender or gender-expansive journey. Remember, too, that you are also on a journey; it will take time to learn and understand, and that is okay.

Before we dive into the issues a little more deeply, we want to offer a few helpful points to keep in mind:

- **You are not alone.** It is helpful to remember that you and your loved one are not alone. Despite the scarcity of studies that estimate the percentage of the population

that self-identifies as transgender, a 2016 study from The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law analyzed statistics from four national and two state population-based surveys and estimated that there are nearly 1.4 million transgender individuals in the U.S., with roughly 0.6 percent of adults (or six people in every 1,000) aged 18–64 identifying as transgender[1]. Other researchers estimate that one in 1,000 people are born feeling that their sex does not conform to their internal sense of their gender[2].

- **You are not at fault.** No one knows why one is transgender or gender expansive, but we do know that there is no evidence suggesting parenting or experiences in childhood are in any way related to being either. There is no blame, as *there is nothing wrong with your loved one*. Or you. You did not "cause this;" you can, however, play a crucial role in how your loved one will ultimately feel about it.
- **You are important.** Self-care is crucial during this time, which means you must find support for YOU! It is imperative that you find a time, place, and people to whom you can express your true emotions, away from your transgender or gender-expansive loved one, especially if your emotions are negative. PFLAG meetings are an important part of this support, providing a safe place to work through your feelings, anxieties, or confusion, and with other parents, family members, and friends who have gone through similar experiences. Find a chapter near you by visiting **pflag.org/find**. If you are unable to find a chapter close by, please contact us at info@pflag.org so that we can connect you virtually for support.

Let's start with an overview of gender and sexuality.

Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation: A Starting Point

What is gender identity? What is gender expression? What is sex? What is sexual orientation? And how are they all related? We know this can be confusing, so let's start at the beginning.

When a baby is born—and thanks to modern technology, often long before—a doctor assigns the baby a sex (male or female) based on its *biology* (in this case its visible sex organs, although biological sex also includes things like internal sex organs, hormones, and chromosomes). This is what gets written on a person's birth certificate. This is known as the

baby's *assigned sex*. From that assigned sex, we then assume the baby's gender.

For the vast majority of people, their *gender identity*—that is, their internal sense of being male, female, somewhere in between, or neither—matches the assignment given to them at birth. Those people are called *cisgender*, with *cis* being a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side" hence, their gender is on the same side as—matches—their biological sex and their assumed gender. But for others, their gender identity does not correspond with that assignment, and those individuals often refer to themselves as *transgender*, with *trans* being the Latin prefix for "across or over." For those individuals, there is a disconnect between how others perceive them based on outside physical characteristics and their internal sense of themselves.

People share their gender identity at different times in their lives: Some do so from a very young age, while others do not make it known to anyone but themselves until later in life. This can be for a variety of reasons, including safety concerns, fear of alienation from friends and family, or potential discrimination at work, at home, or in public.

Then there are those who don't define themselves specifically as male or female: Perhaps they identify as both, or as neither, but they don't necessarily feel that their internal sense of self is at odds with their biological sex. This is called being *gender expansive*.

> ***"I feel that I don't have masculine and feminine days. I have dress days and I have bow tie days. Clothing doesn't have a gender, and neither do I."***
>
> ***—Misha W., 19, Albany, NY***

Everyone demonstrates their gender—that is, communicates their gender identity in a manner that is comfortable for them—through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, or other outward presentations or behaviors. This communication, whether conscious or subconscious, is called *gender expression*. In most societies, certain examples of gender expression have been labeled "masculine" and others "feminine." These labels are actually quite artificial; all expressions of gender are valid, and while there may be patterns of expression more common for one gender than another, these patterns are not rules. When one doesn't strictly adhere to societal norms of "masculine" or "feminine" in their gender expression—or their gender expression does not coincide with

their assigned gender—we refer to that as an example of being *gender expansive* (or *gender creative*). Visit the glossary at the end of this publication for similar terms and definitions.

> ***"I don't feel like a grey area or a question mark. I feel like me."***
>
> ***—Kimberly S., 27, Portland, ME***

As a child gets older, they will potentially become aware of feelings of attraction—physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual—towards other people. Toward whom they feel this attraction describes their *sexual orientation*.

It is important to note that gender identity neither relates to, nor determines, sexual orientation; just like people who are cisgender, people who are transgender can also identify as gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. This might help answer a question we hear often: Why does a transgender person (let's say, for example, a transgender man) go through the trouble of transitioning from female to male if he is attracted to men (or vice versa for a transgender woman)? Doesn't that just mean they're straight?

No, it doesn't. The key takeaway here is that it is not the sexual orientation that is the focus, but the gender identity: Their internal sense of gender does not correspond with their biological sex, regardless of their attraction to other people.

Gender identity. Gender expression. Sexual orientation.

Each one separate, each one distinct, and each of us has all of them!

SOME (VERY) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What causes someone to be transgender?

There is no single explanation for why some people are transgender. Transgender people have existed throughout history and across societies the world over. The diversity of transgender expression and experiences argues against any simple explanation. Dr. Johanna Olson, Medical Director of the Center for Transyouth Health and Development at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, says, "Trying to identify causes, whether they are genetic, hormonal, or something else entirely, those studies are underway. The question is, what contributes to the formation of gender identity? It's really complex." Whatever the cause, there is nothing wrong with your loved one, and supporting them is critical and helps result in a more positive outcome for them.[3] [4]

What's the difference between being transgender and transsexual?

"Transsexual" is a less frequently used—and sometimes misunderstood—term (considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive, and others to be uniquely applicable to them) which refers to people who are transgender who use (or consider using) medical interventions such as hormone therapy or surgery (or a combination of the two) or pursue medical interventions as part of the process of expressing their gender. There are also people who identify as *"transgender"* who seek medical intervention.

The words *"transgender"* and *"transsexual"* do have one thing in common: They are both adjectives (used to describe something) not nouns or verbs. Just as you wouldn't say someone has been "gayed" or "straightened," neither would you say someone has been or become "transgendered." Saying "Alice is a person who is transgender" is correct—just like saying "Alice is a person who is young"—but saying "Alice is a transgender" or "Alice is transgendered" is not. In fact, saying either of the others is considered offensive, so avoid using these words in those ways.[5]

Aren't there only two genders?

No. In America we tend to only recognize two genders, referred to as the "gender binary"—masculine/man/male and feminine/woman/female. But cultures throughout the world recognize many more than just two genders.

The Bugis people of Indonesia recognize a total of five genders. In India there is a third gender called *"Hijra"* that is neither male nor female. The fa'afafine is a third gender, as well as a sexuality, in Samoa. The muxe people are a third gender in Mexico. In Australia, the High Court made a landmark decision in 2014 formally recognizing a third, neutral gender that is neither male nor female, and in Germany, a third gender option became available on birth certificates to those whose babies were born of an indeterminate biological sex. To learn more about how other cultures perceive gender, check out the interactive map—and companion publication—**pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html**.

> ***"My family, while at first confused and saddened, have always supported me and now see me exactly as I have always seen myself. And are happy with my decision. They learn more about me and the LGBT community all the time. Win!!"***
>
> ***—Allison P., 45, Arcola, VA***

Like our sexual orientation, our gender identity can be looked at as a continuum as well. There is a whole range of identities to be found on the "gender spectrum." Throughout our lives, we can experience and express our gender in a variety of ways. Our gender expression can change over time as we have new experiences and become aware of new ideas.

Remember, gender is a label created by people. Labels, like gender, are used to help us figure out what to expect from one another and inspire a sense of community. They aren't set in stone, and there is no right or wrong gender to have or express.[6]

What is transitioning?

The process of moving towards and affirming one's innate gender identity is known as transitioning. Some people transition through clothing, some through a medical process, and some through both, or neither at all. There is no "right" way to transition, though there are some common social changes that many transgender people experience such as wearing clothes they feel more accurately communicates

their gender identity, changing their names, or adopting different pronouns. One type of transition—medical transition—can include things such as hormone therapy or surgical alteration of the body.

Since every transgender person's path and narrative will be different, it is important to remember that your loved one will need the space and time to determine how they wish to live and express their gender identity. Some may know and express their need to transition at a very young age while others may not share their needs until well into their teens or even late in life. Again, there is no one "right" way to transition. We will address the subject of transitioning and what it means to different age groups later in this publication.

What is important to understand is that the decision to transition, in whatever form, is a highly personal and individual one. A respectful and caring approach involves providing the love, support, and resources necessary to help your loved one make the most informed decisions to help them along their journey.

There are some who feel that if, as we all believe, gender identity has always been inside a person, then the phrase "transitioning" is inaccurate to describe the process a transgender person is going through from that person's perspective. What we see on the outside might be a change, but to the transgender person it is not so much a "transition" as it is a "settling in to themselves" or a "coming home" process. This description may resonate more clearly with people who are transgender or gender expansive.

What is okay to ask and say—or not ask and say—when I learn that a person I know or care about is transgender?

When you are ready and the timing is right, you may want to consider the questions below, which could lead to a meaningful dialogue with your loved one about their gender identity. Remember, when asking these questions don't begin with the expectation that you'll get all of your questions answered immediately. Rather you are trying to gather information for greater insight, understanding, and empathy. It is also extremely important to make sure your loved one is comfortable and that you respect their wishes if they don't want to discuss certain things with you. This initial conversation may lead to many subsequent discussions that will help you more fully understand your loved one's gender identity.

It is essential that the questions you ask are coming from a place that seeks to better understand the person's experiences and needs, not simply satisfy your curiosity.

You might begin by asking them to tell you what they'd like to say to you, and then ask whether it is okay to ask some questions. Regardless of whether you take their lead or decide to ask questions first, know that it's fine to repeat that you are asking because you care and you will be fine if they want to stop the exchange any time. Once questions are deemed okay, some find it helpful to begin the conversation by saying something like "I don't want to make any assumptions about you or your experience" and then asking the question. Here are a few suggested questions to begin this dialogue with transgender and gender-expansive adults and adolescents:

- What name/pronouns would you like me to use when addressing you?
- What can I do to better support or help you at this time?
- If someone asks me about your gender identity or gender expression, how would you like me to respond?
- Do you have support from other friends and family members?
- Is there anything that you've seen or read that you would like me to see or read?

In PFLAG's Straight for Equality® project publication *guide to being a trans ally*, we tackle this issue of appropriate—and inappropriate—questions and comments, and many other issues. To download a free copy, visit **straightforequality.org/trans**. There is also a list of resources at the back of this publication (and on the PFLAG National website) that you can reference to educate yourself in preparation to have these conversations. Turn to page 70 for more info, or visit **pflag.org/trans**.

Will my loved one be safe?

With love, support, and resources, your loved one will have every opportunity to lead a healthy and happy life, and the sooner parents and guardians, friends, or family members come to terms with accepting their transgender or gender-expansive loved one, the more quickly they will be positively impacted. Being affirmed in one's gender identity and expression can improve self-esteem and relieve the stress of having to hide one's authentic self. Your loved one's safety—in school, in the workplace, in your faith community—can be a legitimate concern; we will address potential life-stage safety issues later in this publication.

Know this: The future you envisioned for your loved one may now look different, but it can still be filled with wonderful possibilities. And while coming out or transitioning will not solve all of their problems—and may in fact introduce a new set of challenges—it may make it easier for them to address those challenges. With

love, support, and advocacy for their wellbeing, your loved one can lead a happy, safe, and productive life.

> ***"When someone uses a neutral pronoun for me, it not only makes me feel accepted by that person, but it also makes me feel comfortable in my own skin."***
>
> ***—Haley B., 23, Chicago, IL***

How can I make my home respectful, safe, and welcoming to people who are transgender or gender expansive?

Your loved one will be most comfortable around you if they know that you love them unconditionally and support them as they travel their gender journey. You can help ease their possible feelings of vulnerability by creating a respectful space at home where your loved one can explore and define their gender identity and expression without fear of rejection.

For your home to be a respectful and welcoming space, it is important to learn the appropriate terminology, show respect for your loved one's new name or pronoun choices, and have a basic understanding of transgender and gender-diversity; reading this publication is a great first step. Additionally, you might consider which photographs, plaques or trophies, or photo albums you have on display. You can either take action or have a conversation with your loved one in advance.

Also, engaging in dialogues with your peers about these issues in a positive, supportive manner and using affirming language conveys your unconditional love and support to those that you speak with, but particularly to your loved one. Further, others will take your lead as they interact with your loved one. Positive language is critical when discussing this topic with others; without it, you may find yourself struggling to demonstrate support. Mindful and authentic intent is important, too: Communicate your feelings with sincerity and honesty, and be sure that, to the best of your ability, your nonverbal cues align with your words. After all, you can say that you love and support someone, but if your body language and tone belie your words, this can lead to miscommunication, hurt feelings, and a less-than-supportive environment.

Learning to advocate for your loved one is certainly a process and may take some time. Ultimately it helps to ensure that your loved one has an environment in which they feel respected, safe, and welcome, and

in which they can live, grow and learn. It may take you a while to feel able to support your loved one: You may fear what others will think or say about you, your parenting, or your family, or you may simply not know how to respond. After all there were no mentions of this as you prepared to become a parent. Reading this publication will help you figure it out, and reinforce your courage to move through your feelings—both the good and perhaps the bad—empowering you to discover a renewed commitment to fully celebrate and support your loved one. Over time, you may discover that the source of most of your anxiety derives from your own fears and expectations that may well change as you seek to celebrate your loved one's authentic sense of self.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL AGES

This section includes information on medical and psychological guidelines from experts, as well as helpful legal information that may be needed along the way, depending on transition goals. You may want to reference this section immediately, or refer to different parts of it as they become relevant to your own situation.

The American Medical Association (AMA)

The American Medical Association is the largest association of doctors (both medical doctors—MDs—and Doctors of Osteopathy—DOs) and medical students in the United States. It has a broad range of supporting materials and adopted policies specific to the LGBTQ+ community, including policies with strong support of people who are transgender.

Among them is Resolution 122, passed by the AMA's House of Delegates on June 16, 2008:

> H-185.950 Removing Financial Barriers to Care for Transgender Patients. Our AMA supports public and private health insurance coverage for treatment of gender dysphoria[7] as recommended by the patient's physician. (Res. 122; A-08)

The AMA's support through this resolution is significant because it comes from the nation's most respected medical organization, states the importance of health insurance coverage for individuals with the diagnosis of gender dysphoria, and helps health providers, litigators, and legislatures ensure that insurers address gender identity appropriately: As a condition that they must cover without discriminating against diagnosis.

For a list of the AMA's LGBT-related pages and their LGBT-specific policy statements, visit the *"Resources"* section at the end of this publication, or go to **pflag.org/trans**.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)—formerly known as the Harry

Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA)—is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, inter-disciplinary professional and educational organization devoted to transgender health.

WPATH promotes the highest standards of health care for individuals through the articulation of *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People*, or *SOC*.

According to WPATH, "The overall goal of the *SOC* is to provide clinical guidance for health professionals to assist transsexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people with safe and effective pathways to achieving lasting personal comfort with their gendered selves, in order to maximize their overall health, psychological wellbeing, and self-fulfillment. This assistance may include primary care, gynecologic and urologic care, reproductive options, voice and communication therapy, mental health services (e.g., assessment, counseling, psychotherapy), and hormonal and surgical treatments."[8]

To read the document in its entirety, visit **wpath.org**.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA)

The American Psychiatric Association is the world's largest psychiatric organization, whose member physicians work together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for all people with mental disorders, including intellectual disabilities and substance-use disorders. APA is the voice and conscience of modern psychiatry.[9]

The APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, more commonly referred to as the *DSM*, is the manual used by clinicians and researchers to diagnose and classify mental disorders.

In 2013, *DSM-5* was released, and it included a revision to the term *"Gender Identity Disorder,"* previously used to describe the diagnosis for those whose internal sense of gender was in conflict with their assigned sex at birth. "*Gender Dysphoria*" is the term now used for this diagnosis, and is intended to better characterize the experiences of people who are transgender. Additionally, it removes the controversial use of the word "disorder" in this diagnosis, which implied that if gender identity didn't match biological sex, that person suffered from a "disorder."[10]

Two other important inclusive support organizations to know about are the American Psychological Association (APA), which is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychologists in the United States; and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) , which is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the

world, and which works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

> ***"My gender ambiguity is uncomfortable for some people who encounter me. But I am comfortable with me. Finally."***
>
> ***—Tracie, 43, Bellingham, WA***

Identity Documents

Legal documents, such as passports, driver's licenses, Social Security cards and records, birth certificates, and more, are required for many important moments in life, including enrolling in school, finding a job, traveling, and opening a bank account. For people who are transgender to live authentically, it is crucial that they have identity documents that correspond to their self-identified gender, including their chosen name and the way they express their gender in everyday life. When these important papers are not reflective of a person's affirmed gender, situations that are uncomfortable if not downright dangerous may arise. Sadly, there is no one process for obtaining or changing these documents; laws and requirements differ by state and issuing agency, meaning the process is separate for changing each and every identity document. Additionally, proof of gender identity can be difficult and costly, requiring potentially intrusive information to be provided. Because of this, statistics show that only about 21 percent of transgender people have changed their identification, and 33 percent have not updated their identification at all.[11]

Organizations such as the Transgender Law Center (TLC), the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF), and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) provide guidance in securing documents, and advocate for better and more streamlined laws and policies. Contact information for both can be found in the *"Resources"* at the end of this publication, or at **pflag.org/trans**.

Now that you have an overview of the issues, let's dive more deeply into issues of importance to specific age groups: Childhood (ages birth–eight), Adolescence (ages nine–18), and Adulthood (age 18 and up). We hope you will keep this publication handy—and offer it to others as needed—as they begin to navigate this gender journey with their own loved one.

CHILDHOOD

"Mama, I'm a boy on the inside. Why do people think I'm a girl?"

"I'm not a boy, I'm a girl. I have a girl heart and brain."

"I'm a boy on top and a girl on the bottom, and some days I'm one and other days I'm the other."

"I'm not a boy, I'm not a girl…I'm just ME!"

Do any of the above sound familiar to you? Maybe you've heard your own child or a friend's child talk this way, or maybe you've seen certain patterns in the toys a child plays with, or how they want to wear their clothes or hair. Regardless of what, when, or how you notice, the idea that your child may be gender expansive—or perhaps transgender—might feel overwhelming and scary.

We've said it before, but we feel strongly that it bears repeating: **You are not alone.**

Many parents and guardians, family members, and friends across the country—and around the world—have found themselves here, and many of them have the same concerns, and ask the very same questions, that led you to pick up this publication.

When a child reveals themselves as gender expansive or transgender, parents or guardians initially have one (or a combination) of several common reactions:

- Fear or guilt that something they did may have "caused" their child's gender expansiveness
- Shame or embarrassment about how they or their child will be judged by others
- Concern that their child will be put in physical danger by presenting as gender expansive or transgender
- Sadness that their child will not have the future that they assumed was a given

As a parent, you may experience a sense of judgment, both from

yourself and others, about your parenting. Whether it's worrying about your standing in your neighborhood, a faith community, or elsewhere, this fear can potentially prevent you from supporting your child the way they need to be supported. **These feelings are entirely normal.**

> ***"I'm the proud mom of a trans daughter. My beautiful daughter came out to me in November of 2013. Watching her grow and become who she was always meant to be is inspiring. My daughter is the most courageous person I know."***
>
> ***—Wendy, 51, Garden Grove, CA***

It is also normal to feel uncertain and possibly even ambiguous about your child's situation. You may feel as though you want **AN ANSWER**. It will be important to develop a level of comfort with not knowing what this all means, and to avoid pushing your child towards giving you definite answers in any direction. This might be difficult, but if you can push yourself to go there, it can also be quite liberating, especially if you can let go of needing to respond to the concerns of those around you and instead simply focus on taking care of your child.

The most important thing for all children to know, at a very deep level, is that they are loved unconditionally. It seems like a fundamental concept of family, but when children are brave enough to look at themselves at such a deep level and share their reflections with those around them, it is crucial to remind them over and over of how proud you are of them for asserting this level of authenticity. It is the bravest thing a human being can do, and when a child is celebrated for doing so by a parent, caretaker, family member, or friend, it can be heartwarming; more importantly, it can be lifesaving.

Let's address some common questions.[12]

How can my child know anything about their gender at such a young age?

Unlike sexual attraction or orientation, which typically develops a bit later, our sense of self (including gender) becomes apparent at a very young age; for most this is between the ages of two and four years old, and this awareness remains stable over time. Can you remember when you became aware of your own sense of self? When you realized you had a sense of your own gender? Maybe you've never even had a reason to think about it, because the sex you were assigned at birth coincided with the gender you understood

yourself to be. This is true for the majority of people.

For children who identify as transgender, the experience is entirely different. Imagine this: You wake one morning in the body of—to speak in the binary for a moment—the opposite sex. Everywhere you go, people address you with incorrect pronouns and treat you differently even though, in your mind, you are still the same "you" that you've always been on the inside. Would you feel uncomfortable being called a name you don't consider yours or using a restroom assigned to people who do not match your gender as you understand yourself? Very likely so. This is the experience transgender children have from a very early age; they understand that their assigned gender in some way does not match their own sense of their gender and self.

> ***"This 9 year old child is no longer my daughter, but my wonderful son...His long term goals? To watch as much Star Wars as possible, to play as much basketball as possible and to become the first transgender president of the United States. With his spirit and strength, I look forward to it."***
>
> ***—Jennifer C., 35, New Bedford, MA***

Or perhaps imagine that your own sense of gender matches the gender you were assigned at birth, but your desire to express yourself through clothes or your hairstyle, or play with certain toys, did not match society's expectations of what you "should" look like or play with. A little boy dressing up like a princess? Preposterous. A little girl wanting all of her hair cut off, and to dress in "typically" male clothes? That makes no sense. It might make you feel like you need to hide yourself away and push down the desire to express your true innate sense of yourself. This is the experience of the gender-expansive child; they begin to understand that they are not following society's typical view of how people of different genders should act, dress, style themselves, or play.

As you can see, children know a lot about themselves and their gender from a very early age. And whether they reveal themselves to be gender expansive, transgender, or eventually neither, the most important thing we can do is listen to what our children are telling us, and really hear them.

Is this a phase?

It takes time to know whether a child's exploration of gender is a phase or something more. It is quite common for children to "try on" different aspects of gender through

their play, clothing, or toys. This experimentation is typically brief and often situational, such as with certain friends or in specific settings. But when such behaviors continue, or raise concerns for the adults around the child, experts frequently encourage families to assess the degree to which the child's atypical gender is "insistent, consistent, and persistent." According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "A pervasive, consistent, persistent and insistent sense of being the other gender and some degree of gender dysphoria are unique characteristics of transgender children."[13] A young gender-expansive child may outgrow the feeling, but for children whose gender-expansive identity has remained stable and unchanged beyond this age—insistently, persistently, and consistently—this will more than likely continue throughout life.

Regardless of the eventual outcome, however, the self-esteem, mental wellbeing, and overall health of a gender-expansive or transgender child (or adult) relies heavily on family acceptance; receiving love, support, and compassion from guardians is crucial.

How do I know if my child is transgender, as opposed to gender expansive?

Transgender and gender-expansive children often express similar behaviors, but the "consistent, persistent, and insistent" declaration of being a different gender is unique to kids who are transgender.

Gender-expansive children express their gender in ways that are not consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may sometimes be perceived as "feminine boys" or "masculine girls." Transgender children may feel (and express) from an early age that their internal sense of their gender is different from their assigned gender, often expressing discomfort with their bodies, and in particular, their genitals; others may not. Moreover, while many transgender children will be quite binary in their thinking about gender, gender-expansive kids may well be more fluid and flexible in moving along the gender spectrum (or off of it entirely).

One way to think about the difference is that while all transgender children are gender expansive, not all gender-expansive children are transgender.[14]

Who will love my child besides me?

All parents and guardians want their children to be loved and to find a life partner (if so desired). For parents of transgender or gender-expansive children, this wish can turn quickly to fear that their child may never find this—or may have a very difficult time doing so. The single most important

tool you can give your child is the pride and self-esteem to help them know that they deserve love from a partner who is kind, caring, and supportive. Love starts at home, with parents and guardians; when children receive that unconditional love, they will derive the confidence they need to know they deserve that love from others as well.

Remember this: Many transgender and gender-expansive individuals find themselves having the same joys (and hurts) that come with seeking romantic connections with others as their cisgender peers, finding partners, getting married, raising children, and experiencing many of the same lifetime milestones. While their path getting there may be different than expected, your transgender or gender-expansive child has the potential to be truly and deeply loved by many people in addition to you.

Now that we've tackled some typical early questions, let's discuss the different types of support necessary for the best and healthiest start to your child or young loved one's life.

Social Support

Social Transition

For children who are gender expansive, or those who identify as a gender that is different from their assigned gender and are "persistent, consistent and insistent" in that identification, it is important to listen carefully to what they are requesting about navigating the social situations in which they find themselves, including the desire to dress and play in ways that make them feel like their authentic selves. For transgender kids, this might mean a social transition, which can be anything from changing their haircut to changing their style of clothing, to changing their name. All of the above and more are options, and often change over time. Each of these can bring a transgender or gender-expansive young person great comfort, alleviating much of the anxiety they may have about their identity.

While the simplest path may seem to be to encourage your transgender or gender-expansive child to be more gender conforming, doing so sends the message that the child is somehow wrong and, in the long run, this approach is more harmful than helpful. Instead, when supported in these needs, many of the indicators of distress, such as withdrawal, depression, anger and anxiety, may be greatly reduced or even disappear.

At the same time, your child's desire to authentically express themselves or socially transition—whether that means wearing a skirt instead of pants, wearing a bow tie instead of a blouse, or changing their name—may raise great concerns for you as

a guardian. How will those around my child or loved one react? Will my child be bullied? Can I trust the adults responsible for my child's safety to act knowledgeably and responsibly? Will my child be safe? These are very real concerns, and cannot be taken lightly. First and foremost, your child's safety must be your primary concern. However, it is important to recognize that with appropriate planning, a great many steps can be taken to align your child's social surroundings to better recognize and accept your child's authentic gender. A growing body of knowledge and practice is emerging that can be utilized in support of this transformative process.

Sharing the News

There is no one right way to share your story—whether about a transgender child or a gender-expansive child—with others. Listen to your loved one, ask questions that are age appropriate, and then be prepared to discuss with them how to talk about these changes with family and friends. Some guardians choose to write a letter, sharing en masse with close friends and family what is going on with a young loved one, and letting them know about new names, new pronouns, and what to expect the next time they all gather. Our friends at Gender Spectrum have samples of such letters; visit the "Resources" page at **genderspectrum.org**. Others choose to share the information in person, either in groups or one-on-one.

No matter which method you choose, here are a few helpful guidelines:

- **Be informative.** While it's true that transgender and gender-expansive visibility is at an all-time high, that doesn't necessarily mean that those around you will be knowledgeable on the subject. Be prepared to answer basic questions, including some that may feel insensitive or hurtful. Be clear about what questions are off limits, and let friends and family know when and where you are willing to answer their questions.
- **Be prepared.** While you are not required to be anyone's teacher—and it would be highly stressful to assume that role on top of providing support for your loved one—being prepared with a few easy answers, as well as some helpful resources (at the end of this publication, or at **pflag.org/trans**), will go a long way toward having those you care about understand more deeply. At the same time, be careful not to overwhelm those around you with too much information. Find one or two clear and concise articles, websites, or video links. If people want more, they can ask.

- **Be specific.** Be clear about what you are asking people to do. Whether it's a request to use a new gender pronoun or new name, to give compliments on new clothes or hairstyles, or simply to refrain from commenting at all, the best-shared stories end with some kind of ask. It may be as simple as saying, "You don't have to understand, but you do have to be respectful, regardless of your personal feelings." This also includes gently setting limits when people are offering unsolicited advice or opinions.
- **Be confident.** Be strong and lead with love, setting an example of how you'd like others to behave. This may be new for you, but there is nothing wrong with having a child who is transgender or gender expansive. In fact, there is a great amount of pride to be taken in the act of supporting a loved one through a journey that is not universally understood by others. The people around you will follow your lead; the degree to which you can be comfortable (or appear so!) will greatly influence how those around you respond. Own the words you use, own the confident tone of voice you say them with, and remember that, above all else, you are responsible for acting in the best interests of your child or young loved one, not taking care of those around you who may not understand.

Navigating Social Challenges

You may have concerns about your loved one's peers: Will they be accepting and understanding? And the parents of those peers are another potential source of concern: Will they be supportive and help to answer their own children's questions about gender? Face the fear, answer questions honestly, and be willing to work with your loved one as they make decisions about their gender presentation. It is likely that the opportunity to present their gender in a way that feels best for them will have a positive outcome.

A potential source of concern for a child may include having to navigate single-gender spaces. While the time for locker rooms may be a long way off, even the youngest child in a daycare setting will likely be required to use a single-gender restroom. A young gender-expansive loved one may feel entirely comfortable using the restroom that corresponds to their assigned gender, while a transgender child—even at a very young age—may express discomfort at using any restroom that doesn't correspond with their self-identified gender. Again, it is important to listen, ask questions, and follow the child's lead. If

there is no gender-neutral option available, and your young loved one will only use a facility that corresponds to their self-identified gender, it will be important to have a conversation with the teacher or school administrators.

As a parent, family member, or friend it is not your responsibility to educate your school's teachers and administrators about gender identity and gender-expression issues, but it is your responsibility to advocate for your loved one, and hopefully work in alliance with the school to create the best possible outcome; providing information can go a long way toward helping you be the advocate you need to be.

> ***"I am proud to know who I am now. I am proud of what I am now. I am here, I exist and I am not going away!"***
>
> ***—Sabrina C., 56, Charlotte, NC***

For more information, read "*Safe Schools*," beginning on page 32, and "*An Expert Opinion,*" in the *"Adolescence"* section of this publication, beginning on page 29.

Psychological Support

While many young children who are transgender or gender expansive may need the support of a mental-health professional, not all do. Generally speaking, if your child is happy and content, therapy may not be needed. But, for the young transgender or gender-expansive child who is sad, depressed, or confused, gender-affirmative psychological support from a knowledgeable and experienced mental-health professional is vital.

In some cases, psychological support may be as, or even more, vital for you. Along the way, there will be answers you don't have, questions you can't anticipate, obstacles you cannot foresee, and people perhaps turning to you to be the "expert" on "all things gender" as relates to your child or young loved one. All of these, along with your own powerful and often contradictory feelings, can lead to stress, anxiety, and, sometimes, depression. Take time for yourself to get the professional support you need so that you can, in turn, be there for your loved one. Additionally, peer support is crucial, and this is where PFLAG comes in. Visit **pflag.org/find** to locate the chapter nearest you, or contact us at **info@pflag.org** to be virtually connected to another PFLAG member.

Not all mental-health professionals are well versed in the subject of gender identity and gender expression. There are numerous resources available to help locate a

mental-health professional whose practice either strongly includes—or solely focuses on—gender; a number of these can be found in *"Resources"* at the back of this publication, or online at **pflag.org/trans**.

Regardless of whether you or your young loved one seek professional support, know this: Studies have shown that family support is the single strongest predictor of mental and physical health and wellbeing of transgender and gender-expansive young people, and, therefore, you should waste no time in seeking help. According to a study by the Family Acceptance Project, family acceptance predicts greater self-esteem and general health status, and also protects against depression, substance abuse, unsafe sexual behaviors, and suicidal ideation and behaviors.[15] The bottom line is this: Gender-expansive children may or may not face difficulties as they navigate the world outside of their home. As long as they have the unconditional love and support of those taking care of them, their ability to grapple with whatever comes their way will be greatly enhanced.

> ***"I'm an extremely proud mother of a 9 yo trans daughter who has been referred to as a trailblazer. She came out to us this past summer to which we celebrated! She returned to her school to find all her schoolmates love and accept her!"***
>
> ***—Izzy B, 40, Winnipeg, Manitoba***

Medical Support

For children in early childhood, medical interventions such as hormone therapy or puberty blockers (medications that are prescribed to inhibit puberty by suppressing the production of sex hormones) are a long way off. For some children who are gender expansive, medical intervention may never be needed or desired. Regardless, it is important to listen to your young loved one as they tell you more about who they are and who they want to be. Keep the options open and fluid, remain supportive, and keep listening.

For any child, a trip to the doctor—whether they are sick or simply visiting for an annual physical exam—can cause anxiety. For a child who is transgender or gender expansive, a visit with the doctor can be particularly traumatic, as a body they don't potentially identify with

is explored by an adult they don't know well. Even as you seek to work with a medical provider in an effort to support your transgender child, know that while your intentions are directed towards a positive end, your child may nonetheless be quite angry with you before, during, and after the process.

Much like with mental-health professionals, it is important to find medical doctors who understand how to work with a child who is transgender or gender expansive. They must be sensitive to the dynamic described above, flexible in the way they work with your child, and comfortable answering questions as they arise, or if they can't, finding the answers. Pediatric endocrinologists can be particularly helpful, but pediatricians, gynecologists, or other medical doctors who are well versed in the field, have experience working with transgender kids, and recognize and respect the child's experiences and perceptions, can knowledgeably answer questions as your child develops. You may never need their support beyond asking questions, but if you do you, you will be well prepared to support your young transgender loved one through the medical decision-making process later on. Please note that experienced medical providers may be difficult to find, but there are many across the country that are willing to refer and consult with providers in smaller and more remote or rural areas.

An Expert Opinion:

Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D., Director of Mental Health;
Founding Member, Child and Adolescent Gender Center

Dr. Ehrensaft is the Director of Mental Health and founding member of the Child and Adolescent Gender Center—a partnership between the University of California, San Francisco, and community agencies to provide comprehensive interdisciplinary services and advocacy to gender nonconforming/transgender children and youth and their families—and a clinical psychologist in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her research and writing focus on the areas of child development, gender, parenting, parent-child relationships, and psychological issues for families using assisted reproductive technology. She has published several books and articles in these areas and lectures and makes media appearances nationally and internationally on these topics.

What's the first thing a new parent typically gets asked about their baby or baby-to-be?

"Boy or girl?"

We are really asking about the baby's sex, based on observations of the baby's genitals and assumptions about the baby's chromosomes. But nobody yet knows about the baby's gender, who that little person will know themselves to be as male, female, or other, and how they want to "do" their gender—playing by their culture's rules for gender or making up their own as they go. When it comes to gender, it is not up to us to decide, but for the children to tell us who they are, if we give them the chance. And they are now telling us, in words and actions, that gender does not come in just two boxes, male and female, but in an infinite variety of shapes and sizes. We can think of it as a web, with each child, over time, spinning together threads of nature, nurture, and culture to arrive at their own unique gender web, the gender that feels most true and authentic. Their gender web will be made up of their gender identity—their sense of themselves as male, female, or other, and their gender expressions—the clothes they wear, the games they play, the children they play with, and so forth. Like fingerprints, no two children's gender webs will be the same. But unlike fingerprints, a child's gender web is not indelible. It can change and flow throughout that child's life.

Most children discover that the gender they know themselves to be is a match with the sex assigned to them on their birth certificate. But a small number of children come to tell us that we got it wrong—the declaration of their elders about their sex or the letter on their original birth certificate, M or F, does not match who they know themselves to be. These children are

often insistent, persistent, and consistent in what they are trying to tell us about their gender—in words, actions, thoughts, and feelings. And they can start telling us as early as the second year of life, maybe even with their first toddler sentence, "Me not boy. Me girl." This is our youngest cohort of transgender people, and if we listen well and pay attention to what they are telling us, we do best by allowing them to be the gender they know themselves to be, rather than the gender we all thought they were. For pre-pubertal children, we call this socially transitioning. You might be wondering right now, "But they're so young. What if they change their minds later and want to switch back?" If they do, then we'll help them, for remember, gender is a life-long journey, never fixed in one point in time.

"Unlike fingerprints, a child's gender web is not indelible. It can change and flow throughout that child's life."

Like left-handed people, our young transgender people are only a small minority of the general population. And like left-handed people, they are a variation of human development that is to be celebrated and honored, rather than punished or denied. And they are our best teachers in alerting us to the reality that gender exists primarily between our ears—in our brains and minds—and not necessarily by what is between our legs, our genitalia, or in our accompanying XX or XY chromosomes, as many are mistakenly prone to believe. We demonstrate how much we have yet to learn when we say, "But, honey, you can't be a girl, you're a boy because you have a penis. Boys have penises and girls have vaginas."

Some young children are quite satisfied with the sex on their birth certificate as a good match for the gender they know themselves to be, but they are resistant to their culture's rules and regulations for gender, especially if they are rigidly divided for boys and girls. They may be the boy in the pink tutu, the girl who trades her bikini for her cousin's swim trunks, the boy in the doll corner, the girl hoarding all the trucks. These are the children we refer to as our gender expansive, gender independent, and gender fluid children—accepting their assigned gender identities but tweaking their gender expressions. Some may take a short excursion in living in the opposite gender, but not stay there. A fair number, but not all, will explore their gender selves on the way to later discovering their gay selves. Yet it should always be remembered that gender and sexual identity are two separate developmental tracks, not to be confused with one another, like railroad tracks—parallel but crossing at certain junctures.

Then there are some young children who re-arrange both—gender identities and gender expressions. They refuse to pin themselves down as either male or female—maybe they are a boy/girl, or a gender hybrid, or gender ambidextrous, moving freely between genders, living somewhere in-between, or creating their own mosaic of gender identity and expression. As they grow older, they might identify themselves as agender, or gender neutral, or gender queer.

Each one of these children is exercising their gender creativity, and we can think of them as our gender-creative children. In their youngest years, adults around them may make the mistake of saying, "Oh, it's just a phase." In pediatric thinking, a phase almost always means something negative—like colic or terrible twos—that, to soothe a parent's anxiety, is guaranteed to disappear with time. That is exactly the negative message often sent to confused or curious parents when the pediatrician counsels them about their young child's gender creativity, "It's just a phase. Your child will outgrow it."

Indeed, a child may certainly move on from their present gender presentation as they spin together their gender web over time. But most gender-creative children are not going through a phase, and parents don't need reassurance that their child will move away from their gender creativity but rather encouragement and support to help their child stay with it to become the most gender-healthy child they can be—the child who gets to be the gender that is them rather than the gender everyone around them might want or expect them to be.

A young gender-creative child will need a psychological tool box and some resilience building to meet up with the challenges of going against the gender grain in a community that might not be ready to accept that child. Parents, siblings, and other relatives will need professional and community support to be the most accepting family they can be—that is a major ingredient for children's gender health.

To that end, parents will need constant reminders that any who have "blamed" them for their child's gender-expansiveness will need help learning that parents don't make their children's gender, the children do. Some parents see so much else going on with their child that they are stymied—with all that "noise," how can they even tell if the "gender stuff" is real? That, too, is where a gender-sensitive mental-health professional can be a tremendous support in sorting this out. And all of us will need to become allies and advocates for these young children, whether they are transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender, and so forth, to create a social world that reaches toward gender infinity rather than shrinking into gender restriction.

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is an exciting yet challenging time for every teen. But for those who are transgender or gender expansive, it can be particularly difficult. With the onset of puberty, the existence of more single-gender spaces, and increased expectations to fall in line with gender norms, life seems to become even more defined by a gender binary.

When a teenaged loved one regularly asks questions about gender, has adopted a new or different way of expressing their gender that goes against conventional norms, or has explicitly stated that their internal sense of gender does not match the gender assigned to them at birth, this is a sign that your loved one is likely gender expansive or perhaps transgender.

If your teen hasn't come out or disclosed to you, but you suspect they may be transgender or gender expansive, subtly show support to convince them you are trustworthy. Speak positively about another transgender or gender-expansive person you know, or a character from a movie or television show. Reflect out loud about gender issues surfacing in the news, or openly read and share new learning about gender diversity. If your loved one truly is transgender or gender expansive, they will be listening for hints that you are supportive and understanding. Give them these hints, but don't confront them and press them for concrete answers. Seek to create space for them to share their feelings by asking open-ended, rather than yes-or-no, questions. Allow them to reveal themselves to you in their own time—and in their own way. Remember too that this is quite likely new territory for your child (or at least territory they are newly discussing) and that they may well be inconsistent and even contradictory in their thinking as they seek to arrive at difficult conclusions about who they really are.

It is crucial that they—and you—remember that you are not walking this road alone. Find the resources and support that are most needed, including well-trained and empathetic psychological-health providers, and medical professionals who are compassionate and

understand the specific needs of transgender and gender-expansive youth and their families. It is important to also seek out social support for your young loved one's needs and your own, including peer support. The PFLAG chapter nearest you can be found at **pflag.org/find**, or write to us at **info@pflag.org** to be put in contact with a supportive PFLAG member.

Let's take a look at the various types of support your transgender or gender-expansive teen might need.

Social Support

No teen wants to be isolated or bullied, and you are an essential part of making sure neither occurs. Helping your transgender or gender-expansive adolescent loved one to thrive socially is a huge piece of work for parents and guardians, family members, and friends, and is achieved through a variety of methods.

To do so, it is important to keep their best interests in mind, and keep yourself educated on the issues. It may be overwhelming for a teen to take care of their own needs as well as continuously educate you, other family members and friends, and their own peers about issues related to their gender. Do your homework ahead of time, and find other outlets to have your questions answered. Additionally, committing to this research will demonstrate your true commitment to understanding the issues, and your teen loved one will no doubt appreciate the effort…as well as the relief that comes with not having to be an educator 24/7.

Of course, there are questions only your teen will be able to answer: Request permission to ask, and make sure those questions are presented in a manner that is sensitive to their needs.

Gender Expression

As far as gender expression—the way in which your teen loved one may choose to express their gender—be supportive of their decisions to potentially change their clothing, hairstyle, or other outward expressions. Remember: Clothes and hair are not intrinsically gendered. Your loved one's choices may stick close to dominant gender norms, or they may defy them altogether. Their choices may change frequently and vary widely across the gender spectrum, or they may be more consistent. No choice is better or worse than any other choice, and no choice makes their gender identity more or less valid. Research shows that when able to freely choose how they express their gender, adolescents are frequently in better mental health, get better grades, and more apt to socialize and interact with the world around them[16].

However, this does not mean anything goes. If there are limits you would set for your child, based on

modesty or other factors, you need not abandon those values. Just be very aware of how important it is for gender-expansive youth to be able to express themselves authentically. Bottom line: Support their choices fully and they will very likely feel safer and more comfortable expressing themselves.

> ***"The feeling of finally looking in the mirror and seeing who you really are as both genders in any given day is an amazing feeling. I'm no longer hiding anymore."***
>
> ***—Ashton K., 26, Waterford, MI***

Another physically transformative option that is less noticeable than hairstyle but potentially more helpful to some transgender or gender-expansive trans-masculine youth is binding, where the growing breasts of an adolescent are flattened, giving a more typically masculine appearance. Binding should be researched thoroughly, however, as some methods are safer than others. If your loved one wants to bind, be sure they are doing so in a safe way. The book *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*, listed in *"Resources,"* has more information on this practice.

Connecting with others who are transgender or gender expansive

For many transgender and gender-expansive youth, communicating with other transgender and gender-expansive people, especially those close to their own age, is crucial. So crucial, in fact, that research has shown that one of the most rejecting family behaviors[17] is preventing adolescents from having LGBTQ+ friends and learning about themselves. If your loved one expresses interest in meeting and talking with other transgender and gender-expansive people, support them in the effort. There are many good and safe transgender and gender-expansive social groups in areas across the country; your local PFLAG chapter may be a good resource for this information[1]. If you are unable to locate any such groups, online communities are also an excellent outlet; we have listed numerous online community services in *"Resources"* at the end of this publication.

Find out if your loved one's school has an LGBTQ+-ally alliance group or Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). Even if your loved one doesn't wish to participate, GLSEN's *2013 National School Climate Survey* (which can be found at **glsen.org/nscs**) shows that schools with LGBTQ+-ally alliance groups are safer for LGBTQ+ students

than schools without them. If the school does not have one, consider contacting school officials and suggesting or offering to help form one. If the school has an LGBTQ+-ally alliance group, consider getting involved, whether as a member, adviser, or volunteer. For more information on establishing and strengthening LGBTQ+-ally alliances, visit the Gay-Straight Alliance Network at **gsanetwork.org**.

Safe Schools

Safety in school is a crucial aspect of supporting a transgender or gender-expansive teen. And though improvements have been made in recent years, the fact remains that many transgender and gender-expansive students still feel unsafe at school. According to GLSEN's 2013 National School Climate Survey, (a study of K-12 education), 55 percent of students were verbally harassed at school due to their real or perceived gender expression and identity, and 23 percent were physically harassed due to their gender expression. 56 percent of LGBT students reported personally experiencing LGBT-related discriminatory policies or practices at school. According to the NCTE/NGLTF 2011 report, *Injustice at Every Turn* (which can be found at **transequality.org**), students who expressed a transgender or gender-expansive identity while in grades K-12 reported experiencing harassment (78 percent), physical assault (35 percent), and sexual violence (12 percent). The report also indicated that 15 percent of students who expressed a transgender or gender-expansive identity while in grades K-12 left school due to severe harassment.

> ***"[My son] openly transitioned in high school which was the bravest act I'd ever seen. The struggles and challenges we overcame as a family became his armor. The closer he gets to achieving his authentic self, the more powerful and self-assured he becomes. I'm so very proud that I am part of this amazing persons life. He is a kind, loving, empathic teenager who can't wait for his future because now ANYTHING is possible."***
>
> ***—M.C., 47, Midlothian, VA***

An unsafe school environment has negative effects on both a student's psychological wellbeing and the effectiveness of their education. However, there are actions you can take to create a safer school environment for your loved one, starting with PFLAG's *Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for*

All program. To learn more, visit **pflag.org/safeschools**.

In order to help make your loved one's school life as safe as possible, first lay the groundwork for secure and open dialogue with them. Trust is imperative. If your loved one doesn't trust you enough to tell you honestly how school is going for them, you won't know what you can do to help and the situation could worsen without your knowledge. Showing compassion and support of your loved one's gender identity and expression, and actively listening to what they have to say, can go a long way in establishing a relationship and dialogue built on trust.

Remember, you are trying to make school safe *for your loved one*. Listen to them to evaluate how they feel about actions you're considering. Something you think will make school safer for your teen may actually draw unwanted attention and have the opposite effect. No one knows how something will affect your loved one better than them, so encourage them to communicate what they need from you; and keep this in mind for all suggestions that follow.

There are some situations that may be impossible to address by yourself, or situations where you meet strong resistance from school officials. In these cases, remember that you are not alone. There may be other families connected to the school who want to address many of the same issues as you; connect with them and work together to accomplish your goals. You can contact your local PFLAG chapter for additional backup and support, or visit **stopbullying.gov**, a comprehensive resource on bullying in schools and how to work to prevent it.

One of the first questions to ask is whether your school (or school district) has an enumerated policy on harassment and bullying. An enumerated policy will spell out all of the categories under which an individual is protected, such as race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. According to GLSEN's 2013 National School Climate Survey (which can be found at **glsen.org**), students attending schools that specifically include actual or perceived gender identity and gender expression in their anti-harassment policies are less likely to face harassment problems than schools without such policies. Visit GLSEN's *Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students* (also at **glsen.org**), to help you identify an effective policy that can be modified for use by your school if it lacks such a policy; bring it to the attention of school officials and advocate for change.

Cyberbullying is becoming more and more prominent as a form of harassment. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center,

34.6 percent of students surveyed in 2014 reported being a victim of cyberbullying at some point in their lifetime. Ensure the policy at your loved one's school forbids and punishes cyberbullying as well as other forms of harassment. For more information on cyberbullying, visit **cyberbullying.us**.

Schools that proactively work to create more gender-inclusive spaces are inherently safer spaces for transgender and other gender-expansive youth. Comprehensive anti-harassment policies are designed to respond to discrimination after it occurs; effective training strives to prevent it from taking place at all. Find out if your loved one's school officials go through any sort of training that equips them to address gender issues. If school officials are not trained, bring the matter to the administration's attention. As mentioned, PFLAG's program *Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for All* (which can be found at **pflag.org/safeschoolsforall**), provides resources for K-12 schools. Contact PFLAG if school officials need help locating local training options.

If you encounter school officials or students perpetuating non-inclusive or bullying behaviors, such as not using your loved one's preferred pronouns or enforcing gender norms, it is important to point these behaviors out. Directly addressing such behaviors can go a long way in cultivating a safer school environment for your loved one. However, it is incredibly important to handle situations like these carefully. Keep in mind, if you approach the administration as a partner, wanting to work with them in making the school safer for all children, it is more likely that you will more likely have success.

Here are a few tips to help you address these behaviors appropriately:

- Calmly and respectfully explain why the behavior was harmful
- Address the behavior, do not attack the person
- Be an active and engaged listener
- Meet people where they are, and be willing to help educate them; they may not be familiar with transgender and gender-expansive concepts
- Do not patronize or shame
- In a non-threatening, informational way, let them know that their behaviors may be against the law/school rules

The other person may become defensive; after all, it is never easy to be told you did something wrong. However, if you follow these guidelines, the conversation is much more likely to be productive for both parties and end on a positive note. Further, if your conversation does not lead to elimination of the mistreatment, you have the option to utilize your school's complaint

procedures or similar processes designed to address harassment and discrimination.

Ultimately, it is important for you and your loved one to know their rights regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination in school. If they attend a public school that receives federal funding, they are protected by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972—a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that receives federal funding—and entitled to file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) if they experience bullying, harassment, or discrimination at school. PFLAG National's *Claim Your Rights* program, created in conjunction with GLSEN, can provide you and your teen loved one information on Title IX and the basics of filing a bullying, harassment, or discrimination report with the OCR. These filings can be made anonymously, and do not result in a lawsuit against the school district; rather the focus is on reaching an agreement about implementing policy changes, and creating a school culture that is transgender and gender-expansive inclusive. Visit **pflag.org/claimyourrights** for more information.

Some states also have anti-bullying and nondiscrimination laws in place to protect transgender and gender-expansive students at the state level.

> ***"We have had many challenges but we have faced them together. As I always say when I speak to parents, counselors, medical professionals, etc. 'If my daughter was so brave to face the torment, how could I not stand behind her and hold her up?'"***
>
> ***—Robynn B., 58, Albuquerque, NM***

If your child is an athlete or has participated in sports that are generally broken into teams by gender, they may be able to continue participating on a team based on their self-identified gender, although guidelines and policies vary by district and by state.

The Transgender Law and Policy Institute's document, *Guidelines for Creating Policies for Transgender Children in Recreational Sports* (which can be found at **transgenderlaw.org/**), says, "All young people should have the opportunity to play recreational sports and have their personal dignity respected. Transgender young people are no different. In fact, because transgender young people often must overcome significant stigma and challenges, it would be particularly harmful to exclude them

from the significant physical, mental and social benefits that young people gain by playing recreational sports. The impact of such discrimination can be severe and can cause lifelong harm. In contrast, permitting transgender children and youth to participate in recreational sports in their affirmed gender can provide an enormous boost to their self-confidence and self-esteem and provide them with positive experiences that will help them in all other areas of their lives."[18]

Another way to create a safe place for your transgender or gender-expansive adolescent loved one is to be sure that their school has appropriate resources on hand. This includes having books and other resources about people who are transgender and gender expansive in the school library or in the school counselor's office. These resources provide a great way to educate the school community and ensure students, including your loved one, have access to materials that represent them. Find out if your loved one's library or school counselor provides such resources. If not, find out the policy for adding resources and make some suggestions. If you need ideas, visit the *"Resources"* section at the end of this publication, or on the web at **pflag.org/trans**.

Materials used for health and sex education in the classroom should be transgender and gender-expansive-inclusive, as well as free of bias against people who are transgender or gender expansive.

If the materials are unsatisfactory, contact the school administration and express your concerns. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (**siecus.org/**) is an excellent resource for determining health and sex-education standards in your state, and provides support for a variety of audiences.

Despite your best efforts, your loved one's school environment may not be as supportive as you would like, or may even prove too toxic for their wellbeing. If you suspect this is the case, talk to your loved one and get their thoughts and feelings about the situation. If they confirm their school does not feel safe, know that there are other schooling options to consider.

Nearby school districts could provide a safer environment. Do some research and determine if they are safer than your child's current environment. Connect with other parents or guardians of gender-expansive and transgender youth who may have recommendations for particularly positive schools in your area. Other school options include home schooling, online schooling, or a combination of the two. If you need assistance going over your options, contact the nearest PFLAG chapter (found by visiting

pflag.org/find), or write to us at info@pflag.org.

> ***"I don't know if genderflux will stay, but all that matters is that it fits right here, right now."***
>
> ***—Anonymous, 15, Pasadena, CA***

Though all of these suggestions are worth undertaking, it is important to remember that your loved one is the strongest barometer of what is best for them. Always ask for their permission before advocating on their behalf in school or other social environments. Each individual and situation is different, and some of these methods may not be universally effective. Though your loved one may reject some of your ideas for advocacy, they may provide you with new ideas. You may be able to support them in ways you can't even imagine.

Psychological Support

Psychological support is vital for transgender and gender-expansive adolescents. Nowhere is this more important than the degree to which a young person feels understood and affirmed by the adults responsible for their care.

It may be that some of the choices you are making to restrict gender exploration are based on concerns for the child's wellbeing. You may believe that by limiting their ability to express or identify in a gender different from the sex they were assigned at birth will in fact protect them from heartache, mistreatment, and even cruelty from those around them. This is quite understandable, but often misguided.

Family acceptance is probably the single most important factor for positive mental and physical health outcomes for transgender and other gender-expansive youth. Interventions that promote parental or guardian acceptance of LGBTQ+ adolescents are needed to reduce health disparities. Put another way, transgender and gender-expansive youth can deal with a lot of challenges in their world when they know they can come home to support from their loved ones. Without it, they find themselves frightfully alone in a world that may well not understand them.

The stakes around your decision whether or not to support your gender-expansive or transgender adolescent are incredibly high. The onset of puberty can be a very trying time when transgender and gender-expansive young people either realize the extent of their gender dysphoria…or go in to crisis without realizing it. Some may begin to feel depressed, as changes to their body

become further incongruent with their self-identified gender. This, along with various social pressures, makes gender-expansive and transgender youth particularly prone to self-harm and other high-risk behaviors that can endanger their health and wellbeing. Make no mistake about it: Without support, transgender and gender-expansive adolescents might experience disproportionate rates of needing mental-health support to address higher rates of depression, substance use, and self-harm than their peers. However, the degree of support and acceptance these youth encounter from family and other loved ones can minimize negative outcomes.

> ***"It has come up in conversation in a number of ways - problems with choosing and using the bathroom safely, getting alterations made to a suit, toying with masculine nicknames, accepting both pronouns at college—and the most beautiful thing happens: nothing. It was accepted as easily as if I decided to dye my hair. We talk about it like it's always been this easy."***
>
> ***—J.G., 27, Selden, NY***

Coming to a positive and supportive place is by no means a simple task. As their child is on a journey, so too are the adults surrounding them. Fortunately, neither of you must travel this road alone. A growing number of trained medical and mental-health professionals can serve as your guide along this path. Evaluation by supportive therapists (and medical doctors, which we will discuss shortly) is critical and will help you determine the best course of action at this time.

It is therefore essential to select mental-health providers and services from professionals who are culturally competent in issues specific to transgender and gender-expansive youth and their families. Local LGBTQ+ resources, including your local PFLAG chapter, can point you and your loved one in the direction of supportive mental-health professionals, as can the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which also provides information on some health professionals to avoid. (For information on these and other organizations, refer to *"Resources"* at the end of this publication or online at **pflag.org/trans**.)

Even with proper insurance coverage for your family, mental health services can be expensive. However, they can be critical to the health and wellbeing of your transgender and gender-expansive teen. In some cases, this support may even be lifesaving. If mental

health services are out of your financial reach, there are other options. Many local programs or centers serving LGBTQ+ youth provide reduced-cost (or even free) mental-health services. If your loved one's school has a counselor who is supportive of people who are transgender and gender-expansive, that may be an option. If there are no such programs in your area and your loved one's school counselor is not supportive, hotlines like The Trevor Project (866-488-7386) can provide a safe place to start. You may also find great support through various online communities, many of which are described in *"Resources"* at the end of this publication.

As you search for an appropriate mental-health provider, be careful about individuals who present themselves as "gender specialists." Simply stating this does not make it so. Find out if they take an affirmative approach to gender issues related to youth, what their stance is on topics such as social transitions or medical interventions, and their beliefs about the role of family acceptance.

It is especially important to be aware of professionals using so-called Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE)—also referred to as "conversion therapy" or "reparative therapy." Although deemed harmful by experts, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Counseling Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and more, it is still being made available by uninformed psychological service providers.

This type of "therapy" assumes that being transgender or gender expansive (or gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer) is wrong, and is a problem that can and must be fixed. Attempts to accomplish this are made through any combination of prayer, aversive conditioning, psychoanalytic therapy, or group therapy.

This mindset and these methods are both incorrect and seriously damaging to the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people subjected to it. In fact, all of the major medical and mental health organizations in the United States have condemned the practice of so-called "conversion therapy," as all scientific, research-based evidence indicates that not only does it not work, but that it can also have serious psychological consequences for people who are LGBTQ+, leading to self-destructive or self-harming behaviors.

So-called "conversion therapy" for minors is illegal in California, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia, and many other states currently have in circulation bills to ban the practice. Additionally, in February 2015, Judge Peter F. Bariso, Jr. of New Jersey historically ruled that telling potential "reparative therapy" clients they

have a curable mental disorder is legal fraud. For the health and wellbeing of your transgender or gender-expansive loved one, it is to be avoided at all costs.

> ***"Agender. I am agender. The first time I said it out loud, it felt perfect."***
>
> ***—K.H., 28, Boston, MA***

While not all "conversion therapy" practices are rooted in faith-based principles, some are. If you are having trouble reconciling your faith with your loved one's gender identity, PFLAG National has two publications—*Faith in Our Families* and *be not afraid, help is on the way: straight for equality in faith communities*—which can help you navigate your spiritual journey while respecting your loved one's identity. Many PFLAG chapters also host nonjudgmental, confidential host groups for people of faith to support each other on their journeys.

Medical Support

The onset of puberty can be a very difficult time for all young people, including those who are transgender (usually less so for gender-expansive adolescents). While medical interventions can be helpful to alleviate this stress, it might be important to also explore psychological, social, and other related issues as well. Some standards of care suggest that medical interventions should only be considered after exploring these issues, while others state that they should be considered concurrently. Regardless, medical interventions should only be used in ways that are developmentally appropriate for your adolescent loved one.[19]

Adolescents face unique challenges with medical interventions because it is sometimes assumed they are too young to really know what they want or to make such important decisions. This is often untrue, and it is critical that they have both expert guidance and supportive adults around them—parents, guardians or guardians, close family members, other trusted adults—to really hear them and help them sort through the options.

There are three different levels of medical intervention: Fully reversible (puberty suppression), partially reversible (hormone therapy to—in binary terms—"masculinize" or "feminize" the body), and irreversible (surgical procedures)[20].

Puberty suppression is the medical practice of suppressing an adolescent's hormone production so they don't go through puberty. The aim is to give them time to explore

their gender, with the added benefit of preventing certain secondary sex characteristics from developing, making some later gender-affirming surgeries (should the individual choose to pursue them) potentially more successful, and others entirely unnecessary. The suppression can be stopped at any time, causing puberty to begin. There are potential side effects to this treatment, so it should always be carefully managed by a knowledgeable medical provider, usually a pediatric endocrinologist.[21] Pediatric endocrinologists treat disorders of the hormone-secreting glands, which regulate countless body functions. These disorders include diabetes, thyroid ailments, metabolic and nutritional disorders, and pituitary diseases. There are pediatric endocrinologists across the country who provide for treatment for intersex and transgender youth.

Partially reversible medical interventions through hormone treatment are also a possibility in the case of some transgender adolescents. These interventions can lead to outcomes that are only reversible by more invasive methods (including surgery) and therefore should be considered only with the input of an appropriate team of medical and psychological experts and, if available, with the loving support of parents and close family.

Irreversible methods of medical intervention are surgical, including genital and chest surgery. These methods should be considered only in consultation with medical professionals who are experienced in working with transgender individuals.

Detailed information on medical and other interventions can be found in WPATH's *Standards of Care v.7*; the book *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves;* or one of the other resources listed at the end of this publication or online at **pflag.org/trans**.

An Expert Opinion:

Joel Baum, MS, Senior Director, Professional Development and Family Services, Gender Spectrum

Joel Baum, MS, is Senior Director of Professional Development and Family Services at Gender Spectrum where he is responsible for all of the organization's programmatic aspects. Across multiple disciplines, he facilitates trainings, conducts workshops, develops curriculum, consults with parents/ professionals, and provides resources in service of a more compassionate understanding of gender and young people. He works with a wide range of organizations, including schools, medical professionals, therapists, universities and other organizations. He is also a founding member and Director of Education and Advocacy with the Child and Adolescent Gender Center.

Let's face it: Adolescence is rough. Between changing bodies, self-consciousness, and a desire to simply fit in, this period is a roller coaster of strong emotions and great uncertainty. Now add to this mix a sense that one's core aspect of self is not what others think it is, or worse, is being actively denied, and it becomes clear how challenging this period of life can be for transgender and other gender-expansive youth.

It is also no secret that this can be a challenging time for the adults around these young people as well. Even as guardians, friends, and other loved ones sort out their own feelings, fears and frustrations, it is important to step back and be reminded of the important developmental tasks facing adolescents. By no means can they be exhaustively covered here; entire fields of study have emerged around each of them. However, it is important to be aware of the "job description" that is being a teenager.

These tasks can be grouped into five distinct categories of adolescent development.[22]

- **Physical:** This area includes the rapid growth and changing bodies of puberty. For transgender young people, this process can be especially difficult as they experience a new physique and unfamiliar processes betraying their internal sense of self. This "gender dysphoria" is one of the factors that cause great distress for transgender youth.
- **Cognitive:** Adolescents and teens are moving from concrete thinking to more abstract and complex understandings of the world around them. Until these abilities become consistent, however, teens can

be quite volatile in their logic. For gender-expansive and transgender youth, engaging with the adults around them about this subject in a coherent manner can be extremely challenging.

- **Emotional:** During this period of their lives, youth are establishing a realistic and coherent sense of their own identity. In the process, they are coming to know who they are in the context of relating to others and learning to cope with stress and manage emotions. Recognizing and declaring a sense of self that is not being affirmed, or perhaps actively rejected, brings a degree of dissonance and chaos to this important process. The result can be a young person immersed in self-doubt and unconfident about their ability to understand their own experiences.
- **Social:** As they leave childhood behind, teens are working out how they will relate to peers, family, school, their larger community and society in general. Often taking place in environments openly hostile to their gender experience, this developmental task can be easily interrupted. Instead of developing an awareness of social cues and dynamics, transgender and gender-expansive youth may feel increasingly isolated and alone.
- **Behavioral:** These various forms of development come together as teens seek new experiences and experiment with new behaviors. In many ways, a teen's choices and actions can be seen as a tuning process for the various aspects of development described above. This includes risk taking, which is a normal part of adolescent identity development. For transgender youth, this developmental aspect may be truncated as they fear taking active steps to live in a manner consistent with their gender identity for fear of the consequences. At the same time, some will take risks that endanger their health as they respond to others' failure to recognize their lived experience. In either case, guardians must be aware of risk-taking behaviors and seek to understand them in light of their child's gender identity.

Beyond the specific suggestions and information regarding the physical, psychological, and social issues facing transgender adolescents in the previous sections of this publication, there are several important perspectives that adults should consider as they seek to support these vulnerable youth

navigating their developmental journey.

Recognizing Time Frames

It is not uncommon for transgender and gender-expansive youth and their guardians to come into conflict around the urgency of the teen's need for affirmation and support. An important perspective to remember is that for them, everything is happening soooo slooooowly. They may well have been thinking about these issues for many months or years, have probably done some research, and, per their adolescent brain, are absolutely certain about the necessary steps that should be taken NOW.

Of course, for parents and other adults, their heads may be spinning as it feels like everything is happening extremely fast. One week they've been told their son feels like a girl and the next week they're being asked to make complex social, legal, and medical decisions.

Both perspectives are in fact accurate, but it is critical for the adults in this situation to recognize and articulate that they understand this sense of urgency in their teen.

"In learning about their child's true sense of self, parents of transgender and gender-expansive youth have an incredible opportunity to deepen their relationship with their child in a profound way."

Further, as they sort out their own feelings about this rapidly moving train, adults need time. However, in the midst of these struggles, it is essential that adults affirm their love and support for their teen and assure them that they will all get through this together. Coming out as transgender is likely to leave the teen vulnerable to adults' reactions. Fearing rejection, they will analyze the adults' every word to see if this is the case. Keep communication open: Ask questions, check in, and give them updates on what's happening. Above all, listen. The bottom line is this: Guardians may not have the luxury of time to sort out feelings while their teen patiently waits. Finding timing and a path that works for both the adult and teen is important—and challenging. It is a pivotal time in the relationship with the opportunity to further a close bond, or conversely, damage significantly, and perhaps permanently, the relationship between adult and child.

Getting Educated

Even compared to just a few years ago, there is an abundant amount of information about gender and

young people. A growing number of professional institutions, community-based organizations, online resources, and other support services are now in place. The experience of transgender youth is being examined in political, religious and popular culture settings. All of these can serve as ways for adults to become educated about their teen's transgender experience. Deepening knowledge in this way will serve to support parents to make well-informed decisions for their teen's health and wellbeing. It is also a strong indication to the teenager that they are being taken seriously, and that the adult is willing to do some of the heavy lifting necessary to support them.

Seeking Support

Beyond efforts to become educated about gender, it is also critical for adults to seek emotional support for themselves. For many parents, it is a tremendous shock to hear their child declare that they will no longer be their son or daughter. Many parents have images of who their child will become, the road they will travel getting there, and their own role in the journey. Milestone events such as getting married or having children may suddenly feel at risk of never occurring when a young person asserts a new gender identity. These and many more complicated feelings can be quite overwhelming, and it is important to acknowledge them, sort through them, and still show up for your child.

Staying the Course

It is not uncommon for parents to move through a series of stages in this process, and recognizing where they are along the way can be helpful. At first many will be shocked, angry, and possibly dismissive. As the reality of the situation settles in, these feelings may evolve into a sense of fear for their child's wellbeing, along with concerns about their own identity as parents. In some cases, these feelings will be translated into negative behaviors that deny the child's experience. Even if coming from a place of love and protection, many of these behaviors can have the opposite effect, putting the youth at extremely high risk for depression, poor health, risk-taking, and even self-harm or suicide.

Over time, some will move to a more neutral level of acknowledgment of the child's gender assertion. As they become more aware of the issues facing their child, this will frequently give way to a level of acceptance and advocacy on behalf of their child's needs. It is not uncommon for these once-struggling parents to find themselves celebrating their child's courage and authenticity, especially as they observe their teen's improving sense of self and the world around them.

In many cases they will be rewarded by a teen who is less depressed, less anxious, and significantly more engaged in their own life.

Listening

In the end, all of the above require the same thing: Listening. Amid the fears, uncertainty, questions, and newness of it all, it can be tempting as a parent to feel the need to take control, resist this temptation. Instead of always feeling the need to have the right answers, consider instead the power of having the right questions. Demonstrate to your teen that you are taking them seriously, willing to learn, staying present and most important of all, never going to stop loving them.

It is certainly true that the prospect of raising a transgender or gender-expansive teenager can be daunting. However, it is also equally the case that a growing number of parents and guardians are rising to the challenge. In the process, they are discovering greater strength in themselves and respect for the young person in their lives. In learning about their child's true sense of self, parents of transgender and gender-expansive youth have an incredible opportunity to deepen their relationship with their child in a profound way. The road may be hard, and there will be bumps along the way, but the destination is worth the effort as parents come to see their teen grow into their authentic self, empowered and ready to take on the world.

ADULTHOOD

Learning that an adult loved one—a friend, a colleague, a family member, or even a spouse—is transgender comes with unique challenges and opportunities. Much like your loved one, you will be challenged with a period of transition: From being the parent of a son to becoming the parent of a daughter or from having a sister to having a sibling who is agender or a brother who is transgender. Or perhaps you'll transition from having a best girl friend to a best queer friend, or from being in a same-sex relationship that now seems straight. As with all news about a gender journey, whether it comes as a total surprise or if you had a small inkling here or there, the challenge is to take your time to process the information and get the support YOU need, while being as supportive as you can of your loved one.

A unique opportunity exists for you to have a more mature and frank—though still respectful and noninvasive—dialogue with another adult, which will allow you both the chance to move through this journey together. You will also have the opportunity to support someone through a potentially difficult experience, and do so in a way that will be the most meaningful and helpful. PFLAG National's Straight for Equality® project has an excellent resource, *guide to being a trans ally*, to start that dialogue. Visit **straightforequality.org/trans** to download a free copy.

Let's take a look at some of the many ways you can be a strong and loving ally to an transgender or gender-expansive adult family member or friend.

Social Support

Sharing the News

Your loved one is the only person who can determine when they are ready for extended family and their social circle to know they are transgender or gender expansive. Honor their wishes about sharing—or not sharing—the news with others.

When considering sharing the news with your family, friends, and colleagues, make sure that you first discuss your intentions with your loved one and that they are comfortable with you doing so; your loved one may or may not wish for you to share their news with others. Clearly, if they are physically (or medically) transitioning, keeping the news private may prove for difficult conversations with others. Again, check in with your loved one, consider your options, and take the most appropriate approach that best suits your particular circumstances.

When you are ready, visit your local PFLAG chapter. There you will have an opportunity to speak with peers who have already shared the news about their own loved ones with their family members, friends, business colleagues, and social contacts. They can share strategies on how to present your story factually and with confidence so that you can be prepared for the wide range of reactions your friends and family might have when you share similar news. PFLAG chapter members across the country have shared that, often times, PFLAG meetings are one of the first safe places for individuals who are newly out as transgender or gender expansive to be themselves, and to dress and behave as they finally see themselves.

Keep in mind that you and your loved one can only control how you deliver this news; you have absolutely no control over the reactions of others, which is why we encourage you to first reach out to those people you feel will be most supportive of you both. After you have the support of some of your closest family members and friends, move onto those about whom you are less certain. Remember that there is no right way to share this information. At times you will have to take some strategic gambles—in these instances, you may very well be surprised at how someone receives this news. If a person's reaction is negative, do your best to not take it personally; a negative responsive, more often than not, is simply an uneducated response, and can be moved to a more positive and supportive response by simply providing some further education.

Once you share this news with your peers you no longer have control over who knows. You very well may learn that others you did not intend to share this news with now know. When information is exchanged in this manner, people may be misinformed. If you think that someone may know about your loved one, engage that person in a conversation if you are comfortable enough and make sure this individual has the right information; again, a little bit of education can go a long way.

Of course, it may be overwhelming for you or your loved one to continuously educate family, friends, and peers about the transgender and

gender-expansive experience. Doing your homework ahead of time will demonstrate your commitment to understanding transgender histories, experiences, and critical issues important to the community. Your loved one will appreciate these efforts. If you have questions that you feel only your loved one can answer, ask permission and make sure your questions are presented in a sensitive manner (for trustworthy information you can use to research on your own, please see *"Resources"* at the end of this publication, or visit **pflag.org/trans**).

> ***"Society has not caught up yet, I've been beat up a few times and called awful names and I guess that's part of it when it comes to openly and proudly being yourself. I'm proud of who I am and how far I have come and I won't let anyone get me down."***
>
> ***—Andrew B., 22, Vass, NC***

Standing Up Against Discrimination

Discrimination against transgender and gender-expansive people exists in employment, education, housing, and healthcare, and the lack of adequate federal, state, and local laws—as well as a lack of strong enforcement of the laws that do exist—may leave your loved one inadequately protected. The absence of legal protections can create challenges and barriers to accessing social services (such as housing for the homeless) and public accommodations because they tend to be gender segregated and lack clear policies on the treatment of transgender and gender-expansive people. One small way you can begin challenging such unacceptable discrimination is to challenge discrimination when and where you feel safe to do so.

Transgender and gender-expansive people might also experience blatant discrimination from various professionals, including teachers, healthcare providers, and social service professionals along with public servants; sometimes this kind of discrimination may even result in verbal harassment and threats. The National Center for Transgender Equality's report, *Injustice at Every Turn*, offers a comprehensive look at the types of discrimination and harassment regularly endured by people who are transgender and gender expansive; you can find it on their website at **transequality.org**. As a parent, family member, partner, or friend, it is important to remember how you can best advocate on behalf of your loved one, ensuring they are receiving the care and services they rightfully deserve.

The most effective thing you can do to help reduce certain forms of discrimination is for your loved one to explain what it means to be transgender or gender expansive, or for you as a partner or friend to share what your loved one is going through. In your conversation, be sure to stress that your loved one must be referred to by their preferred name and pronouns and that reasonable public accommodations must be made for them. For example, if there is a dress code, your loved one should be allowed to adhere to the one that best corresponds to their gender identity as well as be provided with appropriate accommodations to use washrooms, locker rooms, and other gender-segregated areas and activities.

Certain states and jurisdictions have worked tirelessly to address the disproportionate rates of discrimination that many transgender and gender-expansive people experience by establishing real remedies, such as passing enumerated anti-discrimination laws. As you become more comfortable with your loved one's gender identity and expression, we invite you to become familiar with certain jurisdictions that have established such. Reach out to your local PFLAG chapter—or PFLAG National—for more information on nondiscrimination policy.

Sometimes it may be difficult to gauge how best to take action if you feel your loved one is not being fairly treated. In every situation you must assess the likely consequences of intervening. Specifically, will your loved one be safer or be the target of more discrimination after you advocate on their behalf? A fantastic resource to learn how to be the best ally that you can be for your loved one is *guide to being a trans ally*, a publication from PFLAG National's Straight for Equality® project. Visit **straightforequality.org/trans** for more information and to download a free copy.

A Section for Partners and Spouses

The relationship between partners or spouses is a unique and intimate one, a highly personal bond between two people. And when one person in that relationship shares that they are transgender, it can be a great shock to the partner, leading to subsequent strong emotions, including:

- **Grief.** It is quite natural to mourn the potential loss of a partner. Some partners/spouses have described it as being similar to mourning the death of a loved one; after all, the person as you've known them will no longer be there. And though the transgender partner may assure you that they will "still be the same person," this isn't exactly the case, otherwise the need to come out as transgender, and

possibly transition, wouldn't be so strong. Grief is a part of many people's process, and it's important to honor and work through those feelings.

- **Anger.** Some partners go through a period—or multiple periods—of incredible anger, perhaps feeling they have been lied to or betrayed, while others feel as though the commitment made has been broken. Again, anger is a common emotion in this process, and one that needs to be processed and worked through.

> ***"'"At the age of 64, with the help of Medicare, I finally came out as ME. And I am finally 'comfortable in my own skin."***
>
> ***—Danny G., 66, St. Joseph, MO***

- **Fear.** There are many things that may cause the partner or spouse to be fearful, including the potential end of a relationship.
- **Shame.** Despite a newly heightened awareness of transgender and gender-expansive people and issues, this doesn't mean that the world has become understanding and accepting overnight. To that end, shame is a common emotion, whether it is shame about your partner, a decision to stay with that partner, or perhaps how you will now be perceived due to that partner's transition.
- **Relief.** Not surprisingly, some partners of people who are transgender have expressed that they felt relief hearing the news. They may have sensed something was going on with their partner and, once that "something" was addressed and revealed, it lightened a load and allowed them to then begin to move through the process of understanding.

Regardless of the many different emotions you might initially experience, it will be important to find support, whether through a PFLAG chapter or other groups or with a professional mental-health provider, or both. Your partner/spouse will not be the only one going through a transition, and it's important that you have a safe place to share your emotions, away from your significant other.

It is absolutely possible for a couple to remain together through the transition process and beyond; in fact, there are many couples who have done just that! Some have even written books about their experiences, many of which can be found in *"Resources"* at the end of this publication, or online at **pflag.org/trans**. If you choose to stay together, be sure to research the various legal issues surrounding

marriage/domestic partnerships, post transition. Lambda Legal has an excellent resource for people who are transgender and how marriage law may affect them. Visit **lambdalegal.org** for more information.

Even after a tremendous amount of work together, however, some couples may choose to separate. If you do, try your best to do so with love and understanding…this will go a long way in helping both of you in the healing process, particularly where children are involved.

For those couples who do have children, work together to find the best and most appropriate way to share the information, taking into consideration the age of the children involved, and their current understanding of gender. Talking with a social worker or therapist to put together a plan of action can be a helpful and positive way to plan the conversation. Remember that the more comfortable you are in presenting the facts, the more your children will follow your lead. Consistently reaffirm to your children that both of you will always love them and always be their parents, and then take consistent actions that demonstrate such.

Depending on the decisions made for the health and wellbeing of all members of your family, a social or medical transition for your partner might need to happen on a slower timeline than desired; work together as parents to be sure that as you are supporting each other through that transition, you are similarly supporting your children. COLAGE, an organization for people with LGBTQ+ parents, has strong resources for parents who are coming out as transgender. Find them at **colage.org**.

Psychological Support

Before sharing the news with you, it is possible that your loved one has been receiving psychological support from a therapist who is well versed in gender issues; coming out to you may even be part of the process. You can honor that process by not making assumptions, and following your loved one's lead.

Carefully phrase questions so that they are both sensitive and reasonable. Invasive questions—especially those about medical interventions, body parts, etc.—that seem insensitive might upset your loved one and potentially shut down a conversation. Before asking your question, ask yourself if this would be a question you would feel comfortable being asked, or asking a friend who does not identify as transgender or gender expansive. If the answer is no, then find another place to take your question, whether to a support group of your own (like a local PFLAG meeting), or through the use of one of the many resources suggested at the back of

this publication. Remember: Only ask a question if you are prepared to hear the answer. Keep in mind that you want to pace your questions as this will be emotionally easier for both you and your loved one.

> ***"They say when you're trans, it has to do with how you feel inside. If that's the case, I guess I'd consider myself male. But I also love my femininity. I feel like everything all at once."***
>
> ***—R.P., 27, Medina, OH***

And, of course, questions about surgery and other intimate subjects are best avoided, except perhaps in a clinical or training setting, where transgender individuals will set specific boundaries they want to adhere to, and share questions they are not willing to answer.

Adapting to your loved one's newly expressed gender identity, especially when adjusting to a name or pronoun change, might also be challenging, and not necessarily intentionally so; after all, if this is someone you've known and loved for years, then calling them by a new name or using new pronouns may take a little time to get used to. Using your loved one's preferred name and pronoun is a huge step forward and a sign of sincere respect. Almost everyone will make mistakes in the beginning; acknowledge your mistakes, apologize, and move forward.

If you have not fully adjusted to your loved one's new name or choice of pronoun, allow them to set the tone when you are in public together and work hard to use only the agreed-upon name and pronouns. It is absolutely important for you to follow your loved one's lead; doing so is yet another way to provide strong support.

As your loved one's gender identity is affirmed, you are likely to see positive changes. Your loved one may become a more comfortable, happy, and relaxed person, and this goes a long way toward supporting their (and your) psychological wellbeing.

Medical Support

If your loved one has decided to medically transition in some way, through the use of hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgery, trust your partner's judgment as best you can, avoiding overly critical advice or prying questions. Encourage a complete and supportive conversation about decisions, and listen to what your loved one is sharing with you. Always remember to be open, honest, and respectful. Listen to each other, consider the options, and work hard to meet each other where you are both at in the process.

It is possible that the high costs of medical transition will be a major stress for your loved one and, as much as they want to medically transition, medical transition may be cost-prohibitive. It is important to remember that lacking access to these treatments does not invalidate your loved one's identity. Instead, support the wish to medically transition; help as best you can with research on available and safe treatment options, including health insurance opportunities neither of you may know about.

Visit The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health at **transhealth.ucsf.edu** for additional information on medical support.

Of course, not all people who are transgender choose medical options as part of their process. This invalidates neither their process, nor their gender identity.

An Expert Opinion

Jamison Green, Ph.D., President, World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)

Jamison Green, author of "Becoming a Visible Man," writes and speaks eloquently about the various aspects, issues, and challenges of the transgender and transsexual experience, especially those associated with the female-to-male transsexual process. He is widely considered one of the best educators and policy advisors on transgender and transsexual issues. He earned his doctorate in law in 2011 at Manchester Metropolitan University (England), studying with Stephen Whittle, Ph.D., who is the world's first Professor of Equalities Law to specialize in transsexual and transgender issues.

News that an adult family member or loved one identifies as transgender can be a shock, but it is also the start of an amazing journey of discovery. You may be afraid, or angry, or relieved, but most people do have questions at a time like this. Questions like: "What does this mean? What's going to happen to them? What's going to happen to our family (or our social group)? What's going to happen to me and my relationship with them?"

"Don't be afraid. Be present, become educated, and remain open to possibilities."

Don't panic! The first thing to do is have a conversation with your loved one. Keep it relaxed, and LISTEN to their story: What does transgender mean to them? How long have they felt this way? Have they reached out to other transgender people to learn about local resources? How are they planning to incorporate their authentic gender into their life?

Very often, the revelation that one is transgender is not accompanied by dramatic changes. Many adults who find themselves ready to discuss being transgender have thought about their own gender diversity for many years. Some folks believe that if they ignore it, or deny it, their feeling of being differently gendered will go away. Your loved one may have been struggling with their feelings their entire life, but now they have the words to explain what they have been experiencing.

Some adults are not able to hide their difference. Men with feminine characteristics, or women with masculine characteristics are often assumed to be gay or lesbian, and that may be the case for some of them, but certainly not all of them. Some may be straight or bisexual, and some may be transgender or

transsexual, no matter what their sexual orientation. Whether or not your loved one is gay or lesbian, their acknowledgment of their transgender status is a new level of exploration, and a new level of trust that they have extended to you.

As you learn more about your loved one's journey and self-exploration, you may also want to read about transgender experience, or to seek out other resources to expand your own awareness. Being transgender doesn't mean the same thing to every person who experiences it. There are many ways to "be transgender," or to find one's own balance of gender identity and expression. Not everyone goes through a "transition" or has surgery to align their body with their gender expression (which is what most people experience socially, and what some transgender people seek). Your loved one may not know now what their ultimate goal for themselves will be, or their ideas may change as they learn more about the options that are open to them. The important thing is that they are able to be their authentic self.

You may be challenged to accept that your loved one wants to change in some way, but recognize that we all change, all the time, and our ability to adapt is what makes us successful in the long run. Your loved one may feel as frightened or excited as you are, or they may not even know precisely what they feel about their situation or their process. The important thing is that they are able to share themselves with you, and you are able to hold onto your love for them. We never know what the future may bring, but the support of our families and our loved ones always matters and provides a valuable source of resilience and safety. Don't be afraid. Be present, become educated, and remain open to possibilities.

FIRST-PERSON STORIES

One Father's Story

I have a transgender daughter. She has an identical twin brother. Watching both of them grow, watching my daughter suffer, listening to both of my children, my wife, and our team of experts has taught me a critical life lesson: Loving your children is not enough. We must protect them, too, but sometimes we are unprepared to do so.

> ***"The most important thing I did as a father was to open my mind to things I didn't understand, things that scared the hell out me, things that made me grow."***

I was not prepared when my child sat on my lap and said, "When do I get to be a girl?" My baby was asking for help and I was not ready to help her. Since then, I've learned that our journeys start at home, and that we need to be as prepared for innocent and honest statements from our young children as we are from our college-age kids saying, "Dad, I am transgender and I need your help."

Sometimes we feel we don't have the tools we need to protect our children from others, as well as from our own fears and weaknesses. But these essential tools are deep inside of us, tools like having courage, adjusting old and closely held values, and managing fear: We must have the courage to explore our own weaknesses, so we can let go of old values and conquer our fears. The most important thing I did as a father was to open my mind to things I didn't understand, things that scared the hell out me, things that made me grow. It was this hard and painful growth—embracing change, letting go of outdated values—that helped me save my child and my marriage.

Almost every week I read about or hear from a family in crisis

because a husband, boyfriend, or grandfather is not willing to use the right pronouns, sign off on a child's name change, or let their child wear the clothes that feel best. I understand these men; I feel their pain and understand their fears about accepting their transgender or gender-expansive children. They are good men, hard-working, honest, family men who fear the unknown, and don't know what to do when their innocent and beautiful babies try to tell them who they really are; even the few fathers who are ready continue to be afraid and need support.

As young men, our own fathers, teachers, and coaches require us to become team players, to help the team get the job done, to win. In this life, with my wife, my son, and my transgender daughter, I have a team. My team includes counselors, family doctors, endocrinologists, teachers, advocates, and even a few coaches that are trained to help support my child. The terminology, the treatment, and the team look a bit different from my high-school days but the objective is always the same: To support the team and to win.

And by "winning," I mean my transgender daughter gets to grow up happy, healthy, and ready to face the world.

One Mother's Story

When our son, C.J., was a toddler and started playing with dolls, wearing dresses, and drawing himself as a girl, my husband and I became consumed with feelings of confusion, sadness, worry, and constant panic to "figure out" our son, who seemed to be a girl at heart.

> ***"It's easy to feel blessed when you get what you expect. But can you be thankful when things turn out not as expected? When things are more different than normal, more challenging than easy? Yes, you can."***

Six years later, C.J.'s penchant for all things pink, glittery and fabulous hasn't changed; but we have—for the better. I wish I could go back in time, give myself a hug and tell myself that things do, in fact, get better.

I'd tell myself to chill out and give things some time. The only way to tell if something is a phase or has some deeper meaning is to wait it out and patiently observe it.

I'd tell myself to search out resources and get educated. Before C.J., I didn't even know the differences between sex, gender, and sexuality. This unique parenting journey doesn't have to feel lonely; support, information and a sense of camaraderie are out there waiting to be found.

I'd tell myself to gather a stellar supporting cast. We'd be lost without our family, friends, pediatrician, therapist, and child advocate. It takes more than one or two people to healthily launch a differently gendered child into adulthood.

I'd tell myself to show C.J. examples of other kids like him. Before we were lucky enough to be a part of a gender-nonconforming playgroup, we read lots of books about kids who are gender nonconforming or different from the norms of society. Our favorites are *The Boy Who Cried Fabulous*, *A Fire Engine for Ruthie,* and anything else by Lesléa Newman. Todd Parr books are great, too.

Most of all, I'd tell myself to enjoy the path less traveled. C.J. and our family aren't weird, we're just different and if everybody were the same, this world would be a very boring place. We paint nails, braid hair, tap dance and smile big. People like C.J. give the world color. We enjoy the rainbow.

Our family and its support system have evolved over the last several

years. We know that we are here to love our child, not change him. He's absolutely free to be who he was created to be while knowing that we love him no matter what.

Parenting is hard as hell. We used to stop every once in a while and dreamily imagine what life would be like if C.J. conformed to traditional gender norms. Now we wouldn't change our experiences or our son for anything in the world. We are blessed beyond comprehension to have a gender-nonconforming son. It's easy to feel blessed when you get what you expect. But can you feel that way and still be thankful when things turn out not as expected? When things are more different than normal, more challenging than easy? Yes, you can. That is what C.J. taught us.

One Spouse's Story

I did not expect my spouse to come out to me as transgender in 2005, but I now see the clues: The progressively shorter hair, the man's suit he wore to our lesbian wedding, and finally the request that new acquaintances call him Liam (not his real name), a name that sounded nothing like his feminine birth name. When he finally told me he was transgender one August day, neither of us knew how we would move forward. It wasn't easy, but here's what helped me:

"I quickly realized how much I loved the core of my relationship with Liam and how being with him made me a better person. If we could maintain that core through this transition, then adjusting to the male body and male pronouns seemed like a small sacrifice."

- **Patience.** I tried to give Liam time to develop his new gender identity. He chose to use hormones and surgery during his transition, and was over-the-moon with excitement about both. He seemed like a different person for a while—especially when he began using hormones. My lovely 30-something wife became an adolescent boy, complete with oily skin, a revving libido, and a penchant for making rash decisions. He eventually made his way back to his old core values, and we became best friends again. But that took time.
- **Support.** I desperately needed support to survive this transition. I was mourning the loss of my wife and scared about our future. Liam, my usual pillar of support, could not be expected to put aside his own joy and delve into my sorrow and fear as often as I needed. Luckily, I was able to find people in my situation online and in the city where I lived. I also leaned heavily on friends who had always been there for me; one even accompanied Liam and me to the hospital in another city for his surgery.
- **Growth.** In my more enlightened moments, I was able to see this as the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity it was: A chance to recommit to the things I valued most in life. I quickly realized how much I loved the core of my relationship with Liam and how being with him made me a better person. If we could maintain that core through this transition, then adjusting to the male body and male pronouns seemed like a small sacrifice.

Liam and I are happy our relationship survived his transition, and we have since added a son to our family. That may not be the best outcome for other couples in a similar situation, but I hope my story gives other spouses hope that they, too, can find happiness after a spouse transitions.

PFLAG NATIONAL GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The power of language to shape our perceptions of other people is immense. Precise use of terms in regards to gender and sexual orientation can have a significant impact on demystifying many of the misperceptions associated with these concepts. However, the vocabulary of both continues to evolve, and there is not universal agreement about the definitions of many terms. Nonetheless, here are some working definitions and examples of frequently used (and misused) terms which we offer as a starting point for dialogue and understanding.

Affirmed Gender: An individual's true gender, as opposed to their gender assigned at birth. This term should replace terms like new gender or chosen gender, which imply that an individual's gender was chosen.

Agender: Refers to a person who does not identify with any gender.

Ally: A term used to describe someone who is supportive of LGBTQ+ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Allies include both heterosexual and cisgender people who adovocate for equality in partnership with LGBTQ+ people, as well as those who are LGBTQ+ who are supportive of other identities within the community.

Androgynous: Having elements of both femininity and masculinity. An androgynous individual, whether expressed through sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is known as an androgyne.

Aromantic: Refers to an individual who does not experience romantic attraction. Sometime abbreviated as aro.

Asexual: Refers to an individual who does not experience sexual attraction. Each asexual person experiences relationships, attraction, and arousal differently. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are chosen behaviors, in that asexuality is a sexual orientation that does not necessarily entail either of those behaviors. Sometimes abbreviated as ace.

Assigned Sex: The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.

Assigned Gender: The gender that is assigned to an infant at birth, which may or may not align with their sex at birth.

Assumed Gender: The gender others assume an individual to be based on the sex and gender they are assigned at birth, as well as apparent societal gender markers and expectations,

such as physical attributes and expressed characteristics.

Binding: The process of tightly wrapping one's chest in order to minimize the appearance of having breasts, often by using a binder.

Biological Sex: Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include both primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes. Often also referred to as "sex," "physical sex," "anatomical sex," or specifically as "sex assigned at birth." Sex is often conflated or interchanged with gender, which is more social than biological, and involves personal identity factors as well.

Bisexual: Refers to an individual who has the capacity for attraction—sexually, romantically, emotionally, or otherwise—to people with the same, and to people with different, genders and/or gender identities as themselves. People who identify as bisexual need not have had equal experience—or equal levels of attraction—with people across genders, nor any experience at all: it is attraction and self-identification that determine orientation. Sometimes referred to as bi or bi+.

Cisgender: Refers to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the one typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Closeted: Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Coming Out: For people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, the process of self-identifying and self-acceptance that continues throughout one's life, and the sharing of their identity with others. Sometimes referred to as disclosing (see Disclosure below). Individuals often recognize a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender-expansive, or queer identity within themselves first, and then might choose to reveal it to others. There are many different degrees of being out: Some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, and some may be out only to themselves. It's important to remember that coming out is an incredibly personal and transformative experience. Not everyone is in the same place when it comes to being out, and it is critical to respect where each person is in that process of self-identification. It is up to each person, individually, to decide if and when to come out or disclose.

Demiromantic: Used to describe an individual who experiences romantic attraction after a sexual connection is formed.

Demisexual: Used to describe an individual who experiences sexual attraction after an emotional connection is formed.

Disclosure: A word that some people use to describe the act or process of revealing one's transgender or gender-expansive identity to another person in a specific instance. Some find the term offensive, implying the need to disclose something shameful, and prefer to use the term coming out, whereas others find coming out offensive, and prefer to use disclosure.

Gay: The adjective used to describe people who are emotionally, romantically, and/or physically

attracted to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian is often a preferred term for women, though many women use the term gay to describe themselves. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction and self-identification that determine orientation.

Gender: A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual along a spectrum of man, woman, both, or neither.

Gender-Affirming Surgery (GAS): Surgical procedures that can help people adjust their bodies to more closely match their innate gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This term should be used in place of the older term sex change. Also sometimes referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (or SRS), genital reconstruction surgery, or medical transition.

Gender Binary: The disproven concept that there are only two genders, man and woman, and that everyone must be one or the other. Also implies that gender is biologically determined.

Gender Dysphoria: The distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth and assumed gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMV), the term "...is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

Gender Expansive: An umbrella term sometimes used to describe people that expand notions of gender expression and identity beyond what is perceived as the expected gender norms for their society or context. Some gender-expansive individuals identify as a man or a women, some identify as neither, and others identify as a mix of both. Gender-expansive people feel that they exist psychologically between genders, as on a spectrum, or beyond the notion of the man/woman binary paradigm, and sometimes prefer using gender-neutral pronouns (see Personal Gender Pronouns). They may or may not be comfortable with their bodies as they are, regardless of how they express their gender.

Gender Expression: The manner in which a person communicates about gender to others through external means such as clothing, appearance, or mannerisms. This communication may be conscious or subconscious and may or may not reflect their gender identity or sexual orientation. While most people's understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through androgynous expressions. An individual's gender expression does not automatically imply one's gender identity.

Genderfluid: Describes a person who does not consistently identify with one fixed gender, and who may move between gender identities.

Gender Identity: One's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither.

One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced as early as 18 months old.

Gender Neutral: Not gendered. Can refer to language (including pronouns and salutations/titles—see Gender-neutral salutations or titles), spaces (like bathrooms), or identities (being genderqueer, for example).

Gender-Neutral Salutations or Titles: A salutation or title that doesn't identify the gender of the person being addressed in a formal communication or introduction. Also used for persons who do not identify as a binary gender, addressing someone where the gender is unknown, or if the correspondence-sender is unsure of the gender of the person to whom the correspondence is being sent. Mx is the most commonly used gender-neutral salutation (e.g. "Dear Mx. Smith…").

Gender Nonconforming: An outdated term used to describe those who view their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly man or woman. More current terms include gender expansive, differently gendered, gender creative, gender variant, genderqueer, nonbinary, agender, gender fluid, gender neutral, bigender, androgynous, or gender diverse. PFLAG National uses the term gender expansive.

Genderqueer: Refers to individuals who identify as a combination of man and woman, neither man or woman, or both man and woman, or someone who rejects commonly held ideas of static gender identities and, occasionally, sexual orientations. Is sometimes used as an umbrella term in much the same way that the term 'queer' is used, but only referring to gender, and thus should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as genderqueer.

Gender Socialization: The process by which an individual is taught and influenced on how they should behave as a man or a woman. Parents, teachers, peers, media, and books are some of the many agents of gender socialization.

Gender Spectrum: The concept that gender exists beyond a simple man/woman binary model, but instead exists on a continuum. Some people fall towards more masculine or more feminine aspects, some people move fluidly along the spectrum, and some identify off the spectrum entirely.

Gender Variant: A term, often used by the medical community, to describe individuals who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform to dominant gender norms. (See gender expansive.) People outside the medical community tend to avoid this term because they feel it suggests these identities are abnormal, preferring terms such as gender expansive and gender creative.

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

Heterosexual: Refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to a person of the opposite gender

Homophobia: An aversion to lesbian or gay people that often manifests

itself in the form of prejudice and bias. Similarly, biphobia is an aversion people who are bisexual, and transphobia is an aversion to people who are transgender. Collectively, these attitudes are referred to as anti-LGBTQ+ bias.

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term often considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms gay, lesbian, or queer.

Intersex/Differences of Sexual Development (DSD): Refers to individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. Medical professionals often assign a gender to the individual and proceed to perform surgeries to 'align' their physical appearance with typical male or female sex characteristics beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child is able to give informed consent. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children. Formerly the medical terms hermaphrodite and pseudo-hermaphrodite were used; these terms are now considered neither acceptable nor scientifically accurate.

Latinx: An inclusive, gender-neutral term, sometimes used in place of the gendered, binary terms Latino or Latina, used to describe a person of Latin-American origin or descent.

Lesbian: Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

LGBTQ+: An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition, which recognizes more fluid identities; and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender-expansive people (see Queer below). The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The "+" represents those who are part of the community, but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

Lifestyle: A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of people who are LGBTQ+. The term is disliked because it implies that being LGBTQ+ is a choice.

Misgender: To refer to someone, especially a transgender or gender-expansive person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

Nonbinary: Refers to individuals who identify as neither man or woman, both man and woman, or a combination of man or woman. It is an identity term which some use exclusively, while others may use it interchangeably with terms like genderqueer, gender creative, gender

noncomforming, gender diverse, or gender expansive. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or Enby.

Out: Generally describes people who openly self-identify as LGBTQ+ in their private, public, and/or professional lives. Some people who are transgender prefer to use the term disclose (defined above).

Outing: The deliberate or accidental sharing of another person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression without their explicit consent. Outing is considered disrespectful and a potentially dangerous act for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Pansexual: Refers to a person whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people inclusive of all genders and biological sexes. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction and self-identification that determines the orientation.

Personal Gender Pronouns: A personal gender pronoun, or PGP—sometimes called proper gender pronoun—is the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. In English, the singular pronouns that we use most frequently are gendered, so some individuals may prefer that you use gender neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. In English, individual use they and their as gender-neutral singular pronouns. Others use ze (sometimes spelled zie) and hir/zir or the pronouns xe and xer. Replaces the term Preferred Gender Pronoun, which incorrectly implies that their use is optional.

Queer: A term used by some people to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, queer is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ+ community. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer (i.e. "My cousin identifies as queer").

Questioning: Describes those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof. For many reasons this may happen later in life and does not imply that someone is choosing to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.

Same-Gender Loving: A term sometimes used by some members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation (gay/bisexual) without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

Sexual Orientation: Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. While sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation, sexual orientation is part of the human condition, one's sexual activity does

not define one's sexual orientation; typically, it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Stealth: A term used to describe transgender or gender-expansive individuals who do not disclose their transgender or gender-expansive status in their public or private lives (or certain aspects of their public and private lives). The term is increasingly considered offensive by some as it implies an element of deception. The phrase maintaining privacy is often used instead, though some individuals use both terms interchangeably.

Transgender: Often shortened to trans. A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression—such groups include, but are not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous. See above for common acronyms and terms including female to male (or FTM), male to female (or MTF), assigned male at birth (or AMAB), assigned female at birth (or AFAB), genderqueer, and gender expansive.

Transition: A term sometimes used to refer to the process—social, legal, and/or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one's gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual's gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.

Transsexual: A less frequently used—and sometimes misunderstood—term (considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive, and others to be uniquely applicable to them) which refers to people who use (or consider using) medical interventions such as hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries (GAS), also called sex reassignment surgery (SRS) (or a combination of the two) or pursue medical interventions as part of the process of expressing their gender. Some people who identify as transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa.

Two-Spirit: A term used within some American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) communities to refer to a person who identifies as having both a male and a female essence or spirit. The term--which was created in 1990 by a group of AI/AN activists at an annual Native LGBTQ+ conference--encompasses sexual, cultural, gender, and spiritual identities, and provides unifying, positive, and encouraging language that emphasizes reconnecting to tribal traditions. (With thanks to Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board [NPAIHB].)

RESOURCES

PFLAG is the nation's first and largest organization of parents, families, and allies united with people who are LGBTQ+. With more than 400 chapters across the country, we are here to help support you, to provide education on issues of importance to the LGBTQ+ community and their loved ones, and to advocate for equality and inclusion as we change hearts and minds, and transform culture.

To find the PFLAG chapter nearest you, visit **pflag.org/find**, or contact PFLAG National at info@pflag.org. For an extensive, comprehensive, and up-to-date list of resources, please visit **pflag.org/trans**.

Organizations

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
The ACLU works to extend rights to segments of our population that have traditionally been denied their rights.
aclu.org
212.549.2500

Anti-Defamation League
Now the nation's premier civil rights/human relations agency, ADL fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights for all.
adl.org
212.885.7700

Black Transmen Inc.
Black Transmen Inc. is the first national nonprofit organization focused on acknowledgment, social advocacy, and empowering African American transgender men with resources to aid in a healthy female to male transition.
blacktransmen.org
855.255.8636

Black Transwomen Inc.
Black Transwomen Inc. is committed to providing the MTF community with social and economic programs and resources to empower individual growth and contributions to the greater society.
blacktranswomen.org

Center of Excellence for Transgender Health
The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health aims to increase access to comprehensive, effective, and affirming health care services for transgender and gender-variant communities.
transhealth.ucsf.edu

The Child and Adolescent Gender Center
A collaboration between UCSF and community organizations that offers comprehensive medical and psychological care, as well as advocacy and legal support, to gender non-conforming/ transgender youth and adolescents.
ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/clinics/child_and_adolescent_gender_center/
415.353.7337

Coalición TransLatin@
Coalición TransLatin@ aims to advocate for the specific needs of Transgender Latin@ immigrants who reside in the US and plan advocacy strategies that would improve their quality of life.
translatinacoalition.org

COLAGE
COLAGE (a program of Family Equality) unites people with LGBTQ+ parents into a network of peers and supports them as they nurture and empower each other to be skilled, self-confident, and just leaders.
colage.org
206.549.2054

Family Acceptance Project (FAP)
FAP provides research-based educational materials and interventions to strengthen families and their support of their LGBT youth. Related goals include improving the health, mental health, and wellbeing of LGBT youth.
http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

Family Equality
Family Equality works to ensure equality for LGBT families by building community, changing hearts and minds, and advancing social justice for all families.
familyequality.org
617.502.8700

Female-to-Male International (FTMI)
An international organization serving the FTM community through resources and regular newsletters.
ftmi.org

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)
Through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation.
glad.org
617.426-1350

GLSEN
GLSEN works to ensure that LGBT students in grades K-12 are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment.
glsen.org
212.727.0135

Gender Spectrum
Gender Spectrum provides education, training, and support to help create a gender-sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens.
genderspectrum.org
510.788.4412

GLAAD
GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBT acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change.
glaad.org
323.933.2240

Human Rights Campaign
HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.
hrc.org
202.628.4160

The National Center for Transgender Equality
NCTE is dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration, and empowerment.
transequality.org
202.903.0112

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project
SRLP is dedicated to increasing the political voice and visibility of low-income people and people of color who are transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming.
srlp.org
212.337.8550

Trans People of Color Coalition
Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) is working to build a pipeline of activists to engage and connect with one another to create a "movement" of support, resources, and education in our community.
transpoc.org/

TransActive Gender Center
TransActive Gender Center provides a holistic range of services and expertise to empower transgender and gender nonconforming children, youth, and their families in living healthy lives, free of discrimination.
transactiveonline.org
503.252.3000

Transgender Advocacy Network
TAN is an alliance of transgender organizations that work at the state and local level, coming together to build a stronger transgender movement.
transadvocacynetwork.org

Transgender American Veterans Association
TAVA was formed to address the concerns of fair and equal treatment of transgender military veterans and active duty service members.
tavausa.org

The Transgender Law Center
The Transgender Law Center works to change law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression.
transgenderlawcenter.org
415.865.0176

The Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund
TLDEF is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, and public policy efforts.
tldef.org
646.862.9396

Transgender Youth Family Allies
TYFA works to empower children and families by partnering with educators, service providers and communities to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected.
imatyfa.org
888.462.8932

Literature

Children

***I Am Jazz* by J. Herthel and J. Jennings**
The story of a trans child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings, who has become a spokesperson for trans kids everywhere.

***Jacob's New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman**
This story speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don't identify with traditional gender roles.

***Meet Polkadot* by Talcott Broadhead**
Polkadot and friends introduce readers to the challenges and beauty that are experienced by Polkadot as a non-binary, transgender kid.

***Sissy Duckling* written by Harvey Fierstein and Illustrated by Henry Cole**
Elmer is not like the other boy ducklings. While they like to build forts, he loves to bake cakes. While they like to play baseball, he wants to put on the halftime show. But when his father is wounded by a hunter's shot, Elmer proves that the biggest sissy can also be a great hero.

Young Adult

***Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher**
Logan Witherspoon recently discovered that his girlfriend of three years cheated on him. But things start to look up when a new student named Sage Hendricks breezes through the halls of his small-town high school.

Sage's parents have forbidden her to date anyone, but she won't tell Logan why. Sage finally discloses her big secret: she's actually a boy.

Gracefully Grayson **by Ami Polonski**
Grayson Sender has been holding onto a secret for what seems like forever: "he" is a girl on the inside, stuck in the wrong gender's body. The weight of this secret is crushing, but sharing it would mean facing ridicule, scorn, rejection, or worse. Despite the risks, Grayson's true self itches to break free.

Freak Show **by James St. James**
Meet Billy Bloom, new student at the ultra-white, ultra-rich, ultra-conservative Dwight D. Eisenhower Academy and drag queen extraordinaire. Actually, drag queen does not begin to describe Billy and his fabulousness. Any way you slice it, Billy is not a typical seventeen-year-old, and the Bible Belles, Aberzombies, and Football Heroes at the academy have never seen anyone quite like him before. But thanks to the help and support of one good friend, Billy's able to take a stand for outcasts and underdogs everywhere in his own outrageous, over-the-top, sad, funny, brilliant, and unique way.

I am J **by Chris Beam**
J had always felt different. He was certain that eventually everyone would understand who he really was: a boy mistakenly born as a girl. Yet as he grew up, his body began to betray him; eventually J stopped praying to wake up a "real boy" and started covering up his body, keeping himself invisible—from his parents, from his friends, from the world. But after being deserted by the best friend he thought would always be by his side, J decides that he's done hiding—it's time to be who he really is.

Adult

Becoming A Visible Man **by Jamison Green, Ph.D.**
Combines candid autobiography with informed analysis to offer unique insight into the multiple challenges of the female-to-male transsexual experience.

Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children **by Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D**
Ehrensaft offers parents, clinicians, and educators guidance on both the philosophical dilemmas and the practical, daily concerns of working with children who don't fit a "typical" gender mold.

Queerly Beloved **by Diane and Jacob Anderson-Minshall**
After fifteen years as a lesbian couple, Jacob came out to Diane as a transgender man. Eight years later, the couple remains together, still identify as queer, and remain part of the LGBT community.

***Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son* by Lori Duron**
A frank, heartfelt, brutally funny account of Duron and her family's adventures of distress and happiness raising a gender-creative son.

***Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More* by Janet Mock**
In 2011, *Marie Claire* magazine published a profile of Janet Mock in which she stepped forward for the first time as a trans woman, turning her into an influential and outspoken public figure.

***Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community* edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth**
A comprehensive guide written by, for, and about transgender and genderqueer people.

***Trans-Kin: A Guide for Family and Friends of Transgender People* (Volume 1) by Dr. Eleanor A. Hubbard (Editor), Cameron T. Whitley (Editor)**
Trans-Kin is a collection of stories from significant others, family members, friends and allies of transgender persons (SOFFAs).

***Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son, and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance* by Marsha Aizumi with Aiden Aizumi**
PFLAG mother, educator and LGBT activist Marsha Aizumi shares her compelling story of parenting a young woman who came out as a lesbian, then transitioned to male.

Films

***All About My Mother* (1999)**
Focused on femininity and womanhood, this is Pedro Almodóvar's most sustained and sensitive look at trans women's lives.

***Another Woman* (2008)**
Lea, a transgender woman makes contact with the members of the family she abandoned years before when she was a man named Pierre.

***Boys Don't Cry* (1999)**
This film is based on the true story of Brandon Teena attempting to find himself and love in Nebraska before he is murdered in 1993.

***Cruel and Unusual* (2006)**
In this documentary, five transgender women share their prison experiences. Interviews with attorneys, doctors, and other experts are also included.

***Faces & Facets of Transgender Experience* (2010)**
Eighteen people and their families share touching stories about the journey from despair and loss to the joy of being the gender they were meant to be.

***Gun Hill Road* (2011)**
An ex-con returns to the Bronx after three years in prison to discover his wife estranged and his teenage son exploring a gender transformation that will put the fragile bonds of their family to the test.

***Ma Vie en Rose* (1997)**
Ludovic is a trans girl who can't wait to grow up to be a woman. When her family discovers the little girl blossoming in her they are forced to contend with their own discomfort and the lack of understanding from their new neighbors.

***Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She* (2005)**
Examines the diversity of human sexual and gender variance around the globe.

***No Dumb Questions* (2001)**
A lighthearted and poignant documentary that profiles three sisters, ages 6, 9, and 11, struggling to understand why and how their Uncle Bill is becoming a woman.

***Paris Is Burning* (1990)**
This documentary chronicles New York's drag scene in the 1980s, focusing on balls, voguing and the ambitions and dreams of those who gave the era its warmth and vitality.

***Princesa* (2001)**
Fernanda, a 19-year-old Brazilian transgender woman, travels to Milan and becomes a prostitute to finance a sex-change operation.

***Prodigal Sons* (2008)**
In this documentary, filmmaker Kimberly Reed returns home for her high school reunion, ready to reintroduce herself to her small town as a transgender woman.

***Soldier's Girl* (2003)**
A film based on the true story of the relationship between Barry Winchell and transgender woman Calpernia Addams and the events leading up to Winchell's murder by fellow soldiers.

***Southern Comfort* (2001)**
This documentary records the final year in the life of transgender man Robert Eads, who was refused treatment for ovarian cancer by two dozen doctors in Georgia, out of fear that treating such a patient would hurt their reputations. By the time Eads received treatment, the cancer was too advanced to save his life.

***TransGeneration* (2005)**
This mini-series looks at the lives of four college students undergoing gender transition.

***XXY* (2007)**
Biologist Kraken lives with his wife Suli and intersex fifteen-year-old Alex. When Suli welcomes her former best friend and her surgeon husband Ramiro, and their teenage son Alvaro to visit, Kraken learns that his wife invited Ramiro to operate on Alex, who becomes attracted to Alvaro.

Conferences (as of 2015)

Northeast

Beauty and the Beach (Delaware)
cdspub.com/batb/

The Empire (New York)
transeventsusa.org/empire/index.php

Fantasia Fair (Massachusetts)
fantasiafair.org

First Event (Massachusetts)
firstevent.org

Gender Journey Mid-Atlantic (Maryland)
genderjourneymidatlantic.org

Keystone Conference (Pennsylvania)
transcentralpa.org/keystone.htm

Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference (Pennsylvania)
trans-health.org

Transcending Boundaries (Massachusetts)
transcendingboundaries.org

Transgender Lives (Connecticut)
transadvocacy.org/transgender-lives-conference

West

Colorado Gold Rush (Colorado)
coloradogoldrush.org/#/

Diva Las Vegas (Nevada)
geekbabe.com/dlv/

Esprit (Washington)
espritconf.com

Gender Odyssey Family (Washington)
genderodyssey.org

Gender Spectrum Family Conference (California)
genderspectrum.org/quick-links/events

Southeast

Gender Conference East (Maryland)
genderconferenceeast.org

Kindred Spirits (North Carolina)
trans-spirits.org

TransFaith Summit (North Carolina)
tfaan.org

Transgender Health and Education Alliance (Georgia)
thea-plus.org

Virginia TIES (Virginia)
equalityvirginia.org/transgender/summit

Camps

Brave Trails
bravetrails.org
This program focuses on four key elements: Leadership, Community Building, Self Realization, and Service, and offers workshops, adventure and artistic programming, service projects, peer connections, and positive role models to create a safe space where youth can thrive.

Camp Aranu'tiq
harborcamps.org
They have camps in New Hampshire and California, as well as leadership programs for older teens and weekend family camps.

Camp Highlight
camphighlight.com
A week-long camp for children ages 8 to 15 who have an LGBT parent or parents, focuses on recreational activities, nature education, and team building.

Camp Lightbulb
camplightbulb.org
An overnight summer camp for LGBT youth, aged 14 to 17, filled with fun, pride, community, friends, support, self-discovery and memories to last a lifetime.

Camp Odyssey
nwcampodyssey.org
An innovative diversity training and leadership development program for Oregon youth between 14 and 18 years of age, which helps foster appreciation, understanding, and respect for cultural differences while building leadership skills.

Camp OUTdoors!
outdoorsgaycamp.com
Based in Phoenix and Prescott Arizona, the camp helps LGBTQ youth ages 11-24 develop collaboration and leadership skills, and the development of a strong sense of self and community.

CampOut Family Camp
wcgwc.com/camp-out
CampOut's mission is to provide a nurturing and carefree space for LGBT families to experience the magic of summer camp together.

Camp Outright
campoutright.org
A week-long summer camp program for queer and allied youth held at the Common Ground Center in Starksboro, Vermont. Includes a wide variety of activities including swimming, sports and games, visual and performing arts, wilderness skills, and social justice.

Camp Ten Trees
camptentrees.org
Located in Washington State and hosts yearly summer camp sessions—one week for LGBTQ+ youth and allies, and another week for children/youth of LGBTQ+ or non-traditional families.

One Heartland
oneheartland.org
Has numerous camp programs including Camp Heartland, Camp Northstar, Camp 5210, and OneFutures in Willow River, Minnesota; Camp True Colors with locations in Minnesota, Connecticut and Texas; and Camp Hollywood HEART in Malibu, California.

The Naming Project
thenamingproject.org
The first camp for Christian LGBTQ+ youth, providing a safe and sacred space where youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities can explore and share faith, experience community, and advocate for systemic change in church and society.

TYEF Camp
transyouthequality.org/youth-retreats-camps
For kids ages 7-17, camps are held in the summer and fall, and include a wide variety of activities for trans youth.

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We encourage you to immediately seek out help if you or a loved one needs it, especially if you or your loved one are in danger or have thought about self-harm in any way.

For LGBTQ+ youth, please contact The Trevor Project online at **thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now,** or call one of the following:

Helplines

The Trevor Project:
(866) 488-7386

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
(800) 273-8255

Ali Forney Day Center:
(212) 206-0574

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Info:
(800) 342-AIDS (2437)

Spanish service:
(800) 344-7432

TDD service for the deaf: (800) 243-7889
[10:00am till 10:00pm EST, Monday through Friday]

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline:
(888) 843-4564

The GLBT National Youth Talkline (youth serving youth through age 25): (800) 246-7743

The National Runaway Switchboard:
(800) RUNAWAY (786-2929)

PFLAG National
1828 L Street, NW, Suite 660
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 467-8180
pflag.org