

So Your Loved One is Trans... Now What?

A guide to help
navigate your thoughts
and conversations
about your loved one's
gender identity and
expression

@ftmCycle

Introduction

To all reading, welcome! The purpose of this booklet is to provide a little guidance on how to navigate conversation after a loved one comes out as Transgender. As you read, please keep in mind that this book is not a one-size-fits-all sort of solution, and it's not supposed to be. Each and every transgender individual is just that, an individual. Everyone has their own experience and emotions related to their journey and they are valid. However, this is a great starting point.

***Disclaimer** - At the end of this booklet you will find a list of resources and important contacts. Amongst those listed are Crisis Hotlines. Being transgender can take an extreme mental toll on someone and knowing where to get help in an emergency is crucial. Please use these if needed. Help is available.

Definitions

Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB) - the gender a person was assigned at birth based on their external genitalia, usually by a doctor, was female.

Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB) - the gender a person was assigned at birth based on their external genitalia, usually by a doctor, was male.

Binding - a process of flattening your chest to make it more masculine-presenting.

Female to Male (FTM) - Someone who is AFAB transitioning to male.

Gender Expression - the way in which a person expresses a gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behavior.

Gender Identity - a person's innate sense of their gender.

Male to Female (MTF) - Someone who is AMAB transitioning to female.

Transgender - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.

Tucking - a technique that involves manipulating the groin area to make it appear flatter or smoother.

*For different gender identities and their definitions, please refer to the guide [LGBTQ+ Identities, Their Flags and Their Meaning](#).

So Your Loved One is Trans... Now What?

The term *Transgender* has become more and more apparent these days in society. It's very common to know someone who is transgender. When someone comes out as Transgender, common questions that run through people's minds are "What am I supposed to say to them?" "What does this mean?" "Am I supposed to call *him her* now?" "What do you mean 'non-binary'?" "What if I mess up?"

These questions are not only natural, but can also be welcomed if asked in the proper manner and with good intentions. I'm hoping this booklet will help guide you through some of the do's and don'ts of how to navigate your loved one's transition.

What to Say When Someone Comes Out to You

Coming out to someone is one of the bravest and most vulnerable things a person can do. When your loved one decides the time is right, make sure you listen to what they have to say without interrupting them. Once they're finished, assure them that you love them and that you're honored they felt safe enough in your relationship to share such information with you.

Can I Ask Questions?

Of course you'll have questions. This will be an adjustment for you too but keep in mind that this is their journey and you're lucky to be part of such an important and beautiful path. Prior to asking questions, simply ask if they would be okay with you asking questions or if they rather wait a little bit to let things sink in. Remember, they just took a huge step and while

this is new to you, this is something they probably have been very anxious about for a period of time. Time to process before asking questions can be both beneficial to you and your loved one, especially if emotions are heightened.

Once your loved one expresses that they are ready to answer your questions, remember that you are asking about a deeply personal topic. It's crucial to respect your loved one if they decline to answer a certain question. Also, be sure to think about the questions you ask before you say them. Oftentimes people immediately ask if their loved one wants gender affirming surgery. Not only should this not be the first question asked, but it's a deeply personal and intrusive question that shouldn't be asked unless your loved one has openly expressed wanting to talk about it. Instead, shift your mind to what matters in that moment and what you can do to make sure your loved one knows that they are loved. Good questions to ask would be things such as "Is there a different name you would like me to call you?" "What pronouns would you like me to use when referring to you?" It's also good to ask them when and where to use their new name and/or pronouns if they choose. One way you could ask is "Are these names/pronouns something you want me to use in public or only in private for now?" or you can simply ask them to let you know what name and/or pronouns to use when going out, hanging with friends, family functions, etc. Keep in mind that your loved one may change their name and/or pronouns again as they continue to find themselves and see what fits. Never make it seem like an issue if they choose to change them again. Instead, do your best to try and affirm them in their decision. Again, this is *their* journey, you're just along for the ride.

What if I Mess Up?

Mistakes happen. Especially if you've known this person a long time, habits can make you slip up and use the wrong name and/or pronouns. If you use the wrong name, this is called **dead naming**, if you use the wrong pronouns, this is called **misgendering**. If this happens the best thing to do is a quick apology and correction of oneself. For example, your friend Kai just changed their pronouns from she/her to he/him, if you slip up on his pronouns, the interaction may look like this: "Kai invited us to

play video games at her, sorry, I mean *his* house." While not everyone is the same, it is likely your friend will appreciate you not dwelling on the mistake, as that makes things more awkward, but still acknowledging your mistake and correcting it appropriately.

The Initial Shock is Over, What's Next?

Maybe it's been a few hours, a few days, maybe even a week since your loved one came out to you. You might be thinking "Well what am I supposed to do now?" Support, support, support. Take the time to do research on things such as LGBTQ+ centers in the area, ask your loved one if they want to go to the mall to get some new clothes that feel more "right" to them, and most importantly just spend time with them. Do things you both love doing together. Don't let this journey have a negative impact on the relationship you have already built.

For Parents/Caregivers

You may feel like you're walking on eggshells trying to navigate this at first, and that's perfectly normal. There is so much to think about and learn. So many questions you have not only for your child but also for yourself. "What will our friends think?" "How do we tell the grandparents?" "What will they wear to Aunt Carol's wedding?" The first thing to do is to slow down and ask yourself what matters at that moment? What is something that needs attention right now? Your top priority should be the safety and well-being of your child, not what other people think of the matter. The first thing on your mind should be how to support your child. Support can look vastly different from person to person but here are some starting points that can be very beneficial to both the parent and child.

- 1. Therapy** - Therapy is such a great resource when navigating a transition for both the parent and child. Having separate therapists to help unravel all the emotions and challenges that come with a transition is so important. You can look up therapists who specialize in Transgender care. It's great to include your child in this process while finding a

therapist for themselves to ensure they have a say in who they're seeing and make sure they feel comfortable. Don't be afraid to try different therapists if one doesn't work out. Finding a therapist can sometimes feel a lot like Goldie Locks; not too hot, not too cold, just right.

2. **LGBTQ+ Resource Center** - Research to see if there is a LGBTQ+ center close to you. Many larger cities and even some decently small areas have centers that provide tons of resources from educational material to mental health resources to workshops and social groups. This can be a great way to introduce yourself and your child to the LGBTQ+ community and get a better understanding of the experience.
3. **Safety** - Safety should be your number one priority for your child. You want to ensure your child is safe during their transition. This could include a conversation about binders if that's something your child wants or has been doing. Binding is the process of flattening the chest to have a more masculine appearance. This is a common practice amongst people who are AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth) and feel their body doesn't align with their true gender. However, if binding incorrectly, it can do a lot of damage to their body. Because of this, it's important to have these conversations with your children to ensure they are binding safely. Common unsafe binding practices include using an ace bandage wrapped tightly around the chest. Since the bandage isn't meant for this purpose, trying to bind with it can cause severe rib damage, possibly even breaking a rib and puncturing a lung. If you find out your child is binding this way, do not act out of anger. It's likely they didn't know how dangerous it is to bind like this. Instead, approach the topic with understanding and compassion, and be prepared to offer to come up with a solution together. Binders can be purchased online with the use of sizing charts or your local LGBTQ+ center may be able to provide one at little to no cost depending on what they offer there. If getting a binder truly isn't a feasible immediate option, continue to provide support and

offer other temporary solutions such as dark colored bagging clothing paired with a sports bra.

***Disclaimer:** While binding with a binder is a much safer option than using something like an ace bandage, please educate yourself on safe binding practices. This includes only wearing a binder for 6-8 hours at a time and no strenuous workouts while binding.

Summary

Remember that this guide is a generalized, overall understanding of a situation that varies person to person. Each and every transgender person is an individual with their own thoughts, feelings and experiences. How they react is completely up to them, but let this be a soft guideline on how to navigate these tough conversations. The internet is a wealth of knowledge, be sure to use it to your advantage. You can find Mental Health resources, YouTube pages documenting the trans experience, gender affirming items such as binders and tucking underwear and local resources.

For more information, utilize the resources cited at the end of this material.

Welcome to this new journey, it truly is a beautiful experience.

LGBTQ+ Resources

**American Civil Liberties Union
(ACLU)**
aclu.org

Human Rights Campaign
hrc.org

GLAAD
glaad.org

PFLAG
pflag.org

**For more resources scan the QR
code below to be directed to the
ftmCyle website**



LGBTQ+ Hotlines

The Trevor Project Crisis Line

thetrevorproject.org

Call - 1 (866) 488-7386 or

Text "START" to 678-678

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and
Transgender Hotline

Call - (888) 843-4564

Trans Lifeline

Call - (877) 565-8860

National Suicide Crisis Line

Call/Text 988

