

Who is welcome at Trans* Lafayette events?

Trans* Lafayette welcomes everyone from LGBTQ+ communities, the same gender loving (SGL) communities, queer allies, straight, heterosexual, and cisgender allies, domestic and international gender diverse individuals, and anyone else who is interested in discussing and exploring sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and affectional orientation. Trans* Lafayette is a safe and welcoming environment for anyone regardless of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual/affectional orientation, ability level, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, legal status (including undocumented status), age, religious or spiritual beliefs, marital or relationship status or structure, familial or parental status, pregnancy, veteran status, socioeconomic status, or genetic or other biological status. At Trans* Lafayette we celebrate diversity!

How can get more information about Trans* Lafayette?

Visit our webpage: www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette

Visit our facebook: www.facebook.com/translafayette

Email: skye@pridelafayette.org

How can I contribute to Trans* Lafayette?

If you are interested in supporting Trans* Lafayette through financial donation, you can either donate on the webpage with a credit card or email Skye Brown to meet and donate with a money order or cash. If you are interested in supporting Trans* Lafayette through your time, materials, or resources, please contact Skye Brown at skye@pridelafayette.org.

This document was not made by any organization or non-profit, but is offered through Trans* Lafayette at Pride Lafayette. Find updated versions of these documents at www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette, or email Skye at skye@pridelafayette.org, or come to Trans* Lafayette meetings! Documents are posted online in a readable or printable format.

TRANS* 101

For Significant Others, Partners, Friends, Family, and Allies (SOFFAs) of Gender Diverse People



Created by Skye Brown
with the support of many community members

Edited by Aiden Powell

HOW DO I USE THIS BOOKLET?

Who was this booklet made for?

This booklet was made for anyone who is interested in learning more about transgender identities and experiences and being a better ally, friend, family member, or partner/significant other to a trans* identified person. The information in this booklet is mostly in a Q&A format and is directed towards people who have little or no experience in trans* issues or with people who identify under the trans* umbrella. If you are not sure what “transgender” or “trans*” mean, this booklet is definitely for you! If you are a trans* identified person, this booklet may be a helpful tool for you to discuss your experiences and identity/identities with those close to you.

How was this booklet made?

This booklet was constructed by Skye after almost 10 years of being part of the trans* community and working with those who identify as part of trans*, gender non-conforming, and/or intersex/DSD communities. The contents of this booklet cannot possibly describe the experiences of ALL trans* identified people – instead this is only an effort to raise awareness about some trans* experiences and offer support to trans* people who would like a resource that they can give to those close to them.

What should this booklet be used for and what should it not be used for?

This booklet is an educational tool only. It does not reflect the views of all trans* identified people or the views of any organization that distributes this material. It should not be used as a legal document or legal aid. It should not be used as medical advice and should not be used to replace medical/health or legal information given by a medical professional or legal professional.

Spencer Pride Festival – Spencer



Spencer Pride is an organization dedicated to putting on the annual Spencer Pride Rural Festival each year. They also offer a newsletter and other information and resources to people about LGBTQ+ topics.

Website: www.spencerpride.org

Phone: 812-821-3073

Tri-State Alliance – Evansville



The Tri-State Alliance (TSA) is the primary social service and educational organization that serves the diverse gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities of Southwestern Indiana, Western Kentucky and Southern Illinois. TSA works to educate our own community through a monthly newsletter and guest speakers, engages the media on relevant LGBT issues, and trains other public/social service organizations through a speakers bureau and diversity education.

Website: www.tsagl.org

Phone: 812-480-0204

Trans* Lafayette – Lafayette



Trans* Lafayette is a discussion and social group for all transgender, gender diverse, and gender non-conforming identified people, those living with disorders of sexual development (DSD), those who identify as intersex, and their allies. Trans* Lafayette is hosted by Pride Lafayette in Lafayette, IN, but serves gender diverse people and their SOFFAs (significant others, friends, family, and allies) statewide.

Website: www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette

Facebook: www.facebook.com/translafayette

Email: skye@pridelafayette.org

Phone: 765-423-7579

OUTreach Muncie – Muncie

The mission of OUTreach



Muncie is “to provide a welcoming, confidential, educational, and fun place for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their allies.”

Website: <http://www.muncieoutreach.com/>

Phone: 765-273-3465

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)



“Made up of parents, families, friends, and straight allies uniting with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy.”

Fort Wayne (pflagfortwayne@gmail.com, 260-749-4987)

Evansville (evansvillePFLAG@yahoo.com, 812-480-0204)

Hanover (pflag.hanover@gmail.com, 812-624-5244)

Indianapolis (info@indypflag.org, 317-759-3397)

Tippecanoe County (msmeredithrichmond@gmail.com, 765-567-2478)

Munster (pflagmunster@gmail.com, 219-933-8914)

Seymour (SeymourPFLAG@gmail.com, 812-498-2380)

South Bend/Michiana (pflag@gaymichiana.org, 574-277-2684)

White River Valley (wrvPFLAG@gmail.com, 812-829-7896)

Pride Lafayette Community Center – Lafayette

The mission of Pride, a 501(c)(3) a registered non-profit organization, is “to continually educate and promote awareness of diversity, health, culture and acceptance of individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Website: www.pridelafayette.org

Phone: 765-423-7579

THE BASICS!

Sex: all the physical aspects of a person’s body that contribute to their gender identity

Gender Identity: how a person understands their body mentally and emotionally; gender and sex are not interchangeable words

Sexual Orientation: how a person describes their attraction towards others (not the same thing as gender identity)

The golden rule of labels: Only use words to describe people that they use to describe themselves.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does “transgender” or “trans*” mean?

Transgender is a term some people use to describe themselves when their gender identity and sex are different. Sometimes you may see “transgender” shorted to “trans” or “trans*”, but all these words mean basically the same thing. Someone whose body is assigned “female” at birth, but identifies as “male” might identify as transgender. Someone whose body is assigned “male” at birth, but identifies as “female” might identify as transgender. Some transgender identified people do not identify as male or female. Transgender is considered an “umbrella” term because there are many identities that fall under this term.

What does “cisgender” mean?

Cisgender is a term some people use to describe themselves when their gender identity and assigned sex at birth are in line with one another. An example of a cisgender identity might include someone assigned “male” at birth and who identifies as “male”.

Is identifying as transgender the same thing as identifying as gay?

No, these are two different identities. Identifying as transgender is a gender identity, identifying as gay is a sexual orientation. If someone identifies as a trans* woman (assigned male at birth, but identifies as female) and is attracted to other women, she might identify as a lesbian. If someone identifies as a trans* woman and is attracted to men, she might identify as heterosexual. If someone identifies as a trans* man (assigned female at birth, but identifies as male) and is attracted to other men, he might identify as gay. If someone identifies as a trans* man and is attracted to women, he might identify as heterosexual. These statements are not always true for every person – they are just examples.

Why can't you just be gay or lesbian or same gender loving (SGL)?

Identifying as gay/lesbian or SGL is not the same kind of identity as identifying as transgender. Gay, lesbian, and SGL are all sexual orientations and are words used to describe the way a person feels attraction towards others. Transgender is a gender identity and is a word used to describe the way a person understands their body and themselves, mentally. That means a transgender person can also be gay, lesbian, or SGL. A gay, lesbian, or SGL person might be transgender. But they are not interchangeable words or identities. If a transgender person identifies as “male” and is attracted to other men, they might identify as gay or SGL. If a transgender person identifies as “female” and is attracted to men and women, they might identify as bisexual.



Is a trans* woman actually a woman or a man?

A trans* woman is a *person* who was assigned “male” at birth, but identifies as female. You should always use language that is supportive of how the person identifies, not what you think their body looks like. If a person identifies as female, she is female – regardless of what body parts she has or does not have.

INTRAA – Indianapolis

Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance is “a 501(c)(4) statewide advocacy organization working to create a society that values and protects freedom of gender expression and the right to gender self-determination for all.”



Gender Warriors – Evansville

Gender Warriors is “an educational, advocacy, and social group for Trans* / Genderqueer / Gender Non-Conforming people and others who want to further the cause.”

Website: <http://www.genderwarriors.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GenderWarriors>

Tumblr: <http://genderwarriors.tumblr.com/>



GLBT Resource Center of Michiana – South Bend

This Center “serves the GLBT community of the Northern Indiana and Southern Western Michigan areas, including South Bend, Mishawaka, Elkhart, LaPorte, Buchanan, and Niles and everywhere in between!”

Website: <http://www.michianaglbtcntr.org/>

Phone: 574-234-1411

LGBTQ Center at Purdue University – West Lafayette

“The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Center provides programming that engages the entire Purdue University campus and community on LGBTQ issues through an exciting calendar of events, a distinguished lecture series, advocacy for equitable access and a discrimination-free environment, and facilitation of a variety of training opportunities throughout the year.”

Website: www.purdue.edu/lgbtq

Phone: 765-494-7779

What organizations exist in Indiana to support people who identify as trans*, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, and their friends, family, significant others, partners, and allies? (alphabetical order)

Damien Center – Indianapolis

The Damien Center is a health center dedicated to HIV and AIDS preventative care. Their mission is “to empower persons in Central Indiana affected by HIV/AIDS to move forward each day with dignity and to lead the fight to prevent the spread of HIV” and they very openly and actively serve the LGBTQ+ community, MSM (men who have sex with men), WSW (women who have sex with women), and the diverse trans* identified community.



Website: www.damien.org

Phone: 317-632-0123

Indiana Youth Group – Indianapolis

IYG “provides safe places and confidential environments where self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth are empowered through programs, support services, social and leadership opportunities and community service. IYG advocates on their behalf in schools, in the community and through family support services.”



Website: www.indianayouthgroup.org

Phone: 317-541-8726

Indy Boyz and Indy Girlz – Indianapolis

These are both are social support groups for trans* identified individuals and SOFFAs. They meet together on the 4th Saturday each month at 3pm at the Life Journey Church.



Website: <http://indyboyzngirlz.tumblr.com/>

Is a trans* man actually a woman or a man?

A trans* man is a person who was assigned “female” at birth, but identifies as male. You should always use language that is supportive of how the person identifies, not what you think their body looks like. If a person identifies as male, he is male – regardless of what body parts he has or does not have.

What does being a “man” or a “woman” mean to you?

This is a very personal question because the words “man” and “woman” might mean very different things to different people. No person’s definition is “wrong” – it is right for them. Never assume that your definition of “man” and “woman” is the only “right” definition for these words.

Are you doing this for attention? Is this just a phase?

No and no. Coming out as a transgender person and/or deciding to transition is a not something people joke or lie about. Asking these questions assumes that someone does not know themselves well or as well as you do. That is why these questions are considered rude and inappropriate. If someone says they are trans* identified, believe them and support them – don’t question whether their identity is “real” or valid. They know themselves and now they are trusting you by telling you about an important part of themselves. Realize that some people’s gender does change over time. Some people identify as female, then male, then genderfluid, then genderqueer. This does not mean identifying as female, male, or genderfluid were “phases”. They were real and true for the person at the time and now they have found another identity that is real and true for them now. Some people spend a very short time understanding their identities, some people’s identities change their whole life. None of this is for attention and none of it is a phase. It is all just part of the person’s experience and life.

Why can't you just stay a man? Or why can't you just stay a woman?

Some transgender people have never felt like the gender they were assigned at birth. Some trans* people realize they do not feel like the gender they were assigned at birth later in life. Some transgender people come to a fairly sudden change of understanding about their gender and no longer feel like the gender they were assigned at birth. There is no one way someone comes to understand their gender.

If someone feels that they have never felt like the gender they were assigned at birth, it means they cannot “stay” a man or woman because they never were one. How a person feels about themselves is much more important than the body other people think they have. Plus, if being open and honest about who someone is will make them more comfortable and happy, why shouldn't they do it? If changing their body or name is going to make them more comfortable or happy, why shouldn't they do it?

For those who begin to understand their gender as different than the gender assigned to them at birth later in life or those who feel that their gender has changed at some point in their life, being the gender they were assigned at birth no longer fits them. If you think about it, doing anything without meaning it is the same as lying. If someone is assigned “female” at birth but now identifies as “male”, it would be lying to tell people that they still feel “female”. Even if a person acts female to “stay female” it only means they are acting. This is dishonest to the friends, family, and/or partners of the trans* person and is hurtful to the trans* person.

The answer to the question, “Why can't you just stay _____,” is that it is dishonest and hurtful. People deserve to be honest with themselves and their loved ones.

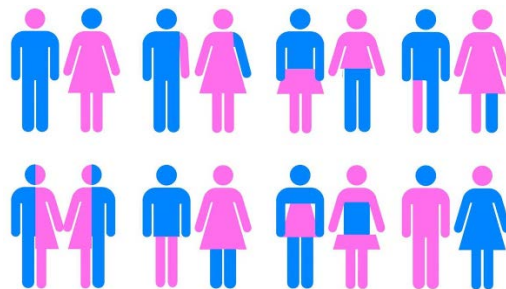


Image from B.J. Murphy at the Institute of Emerging Ethics and Technologies at Trinity College in CT

Are there any other online resources that exist?

Yes! Dozens! Hundreds! Here are just some of them.

Trans* youth Support

- <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/transgender.pdf>
- <http://www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org/index.html>

Hormone Replacement Therapy Info

- <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=protocol-youth>
- <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=protocol-hormones>

Family Support

- <http://raisingmyrainbow.com/>
- <http://www.transparentstl.org/>
- <https://www.genderspectrum.org/>
- <http://www.transparentcy.org/>
- <http://www.colage.org/>
- <http://www.transfamily.org/>
- <http://www.transactiveonline.org/index.php>

Partner Support

- <http://www.transpartnernetwork.com/>
- <http://www.transpartners.co.uk/>
- <http://thetransgenderpartner.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.straightspouse.org>

Ally Resources

- <http://transwhat.org/>
- <http://genderqueerchicago.blogspot.com/2009/10/how-to-be-trans-ally.html>
- <http://genderqueerchicago.blogspot.com/2009/10/how-to-be-trans-ally.html>

How can I support my partner if more than one partner in the relationship is trans* identified?

As with any partnership, be open and communicative. Remember that each of your identities and decisions about if and how you want to transition are independent and personal. If you are both interested in legally and/or physically transitioning, it is very important to make a financial plan and timeline for how you want to navigate this. If you are financially limited, how are you going to afford to get name and/or gender marker changes? Do you have health insurance and/or safety concerns when deciding if one of you should get these things changed first, if you are unable to do them at the same time? Do you both/all want to go through hormone replacement therapy at the same time? Will you be emotionally prepared to support each other if you both/all go through hormone replacement therapy at the same time? Will you be able to financially afford both/all of you going through hormone replacement therapy at the same time? Transitioning definitely requires planning and this is especially true if there is more than one of you going through this process. Be patient and communicative and plan ahead!



Does this mean you are a different person?

No. If your child comes out as trans* identified, they are still your child. If your partner(s) or significant other(s) come out as trans* identified, they are still the partner(s) you had before they came out to you. The main change that happens is that now you both have a more honest and open understanding of the person who came out. Some people feel more free and are able to be more honest in general because coming out and having support from those around them can be a very freeing experience and take off the weight of hiding who they are.

How did you become transgender?

This question is unimportant to the experiences of most trans* identified people. It is a part of who they are and their identity should be respected. Do not try to find ways to “prove” or “disprove” whether they are “really transgender”. No one knows a person better than themselves. Also, no one has “proven” whether being transgender or cisgender identified is biological or environmental. Either way, it does not change the fact that the trans* person who has come out to you needs your love and support unconditionally.



Image from: <http://www.autostraddle.com/new-study-questions-whether-there-really-is-no-difference-between-gay-and-straight-parents-139699/>

Are you doing this to get back at me for the way I raised you? (parents)

No. Trans* people are not “created” by poor parenting, just like cisgender people are not “created” by poor parenting. Transgender people also do not come out as trans* or decide to transition to retaliate against their parents. The only reason trans* people decide to come out and/or transition is to be more honest with themselves and their loved ones.

Why would you make things harder on yourself?

There is nothing about being trans* identified that is inherently more difficult than being non-trans* identified. The only things that make being transgender identified harder are others being intolerant, organizations that are unwelcoming, and policies that are exclusive. If trans* people were treated with respect and laws and policies supported trans* people, there would be no difference in the “ease” or “difficulty” in being transgender or cisgender.

Some people understand the intolerance and discrimination trans* identified people may face and ask this question for this reason. The answer is that the person’s goal is not to make things “harder on themselves” but instead to be honest with themselves and others and LIVE HONESTLY by being themselves.

Is it harder to be a transgender person than a cisgender person?

There is no way to compare trans* or cisgender identities, but one is not “harder” or “easier” to be – these are just identities that are part of who a person is. The only thing that makes a trans* identity a difficult experience to live out is the intolerance of others. Support the trans* people in your life by accepting and loving them!



Be respectful and talk about everything honestly.

partners do not feel that they can be friends any longer. No matter what, do not use your relationship status to convince your partner to behave a certain way or to choose for or against some aspect of their transition. Here are some examples: You should never tell your partner that you will break up with them if they have a chest altering surgery. You should never tell your partner that you will only recognize them as a trans* man if they pay for everything or fulfill other stereotypically masculine gender roles.

If sex is a part of the relationship, sexual activity can be an exceptionally challenging topic to navigate for partnerships with one or more trans* identified partners since the connection of trans* people and their partner’s to the trans* person’s body as a whole – or specific body parts – may be changing rapidly and/or the trans* person’s body may actually be physically changing with hormone replacement therapy or some surgical intervention. All these things make communication vital for a healthy and consensual sexual relationship to be maintained. Before every sexual activity, lay down ground rules about what type of activity and contact each of you is comfortable with, uncomfortable with, and what you are unsure whether you will be comfortable/uncomfortable with. Also discuss how you will communicate with each other that you are still comfortable with what you are both doing during the sexual activity and how you will ask each other to stop. You can do this by using different safe words or certain body signals. Whatever you decide, be sure you both respect each other’s boundaries completely.

Some trans* people also go through a period of time when they want to stop sexual activity as they become more self-aware of how they understand their own body and how they are comfortable with others connecting with their body. Respect their decision and talk about how you are both doing – often.

How can I support my trans* identified partner in their physical transition?

The most important thing is to be respectful and talk about everything honestly. If your partner chooses to do hormone replacement therapy, it can be exciting to see changes in their body they have been looking forward to and it can be a little disorienting to have a very different body from one week to the next. Both of you should be patient and communicative before and during the process of physical transition and you should talk about what you are excited about and what aspects you are unsure about or uncomfortable with. Is your partner worried about self-administering testosterone injections? Are you worried you may or may not be attracted to your partner if they are trans* feminine and begin developing breasts? Talk about it!



Some partners stay together during transition and some do not. Either of these actions is okay as long as you treat each other with respect. If one or both of you realize your attraction is decreasing as one partner transitions, talk about it and decide on a course of action that you can both respect each other for. Some partners decide to no longer be romantically or sexually involved, but choose to stay friends. Some

Which restroom do you use?

Trans* people use the restroom that they feel most comfortable and safest in, the same as cisgender people. If a trans* person identifies as male, they may choose to use the men’s restroom. If you identify as male, you probably use the men’s restroom. Trans* people who do not identify as “male” or “female” sometimes have a harder time figuring out which restrooms to use. Regardless, support the transgender identified person in your life by supporting their restroom choices. If you feel comfortable and are concerned for their safety, you can ask if they would like you to go with them.



Can someone still get a job if they are trans* identified?

Yes, being trans* identified is not a disease or disorder and does not prevent anyone from working and getting paid for their work. The only time being trans* identified might interfere with a person’s ability to get a job is if they experience discrimination. Although in 2012 the federal government determined that the definition of “sex” includes “gender identity” and “gender expression” when defining ways a person is not allowed to be discriminated against, this does not apply to all work places and some work places may choose to ignore this illegally. When employers request a background check they need to get written consent from the possible employee to access their work history, credit report, school records, and some or all criminal history information. Often these documents will have a trans* person’s birth name on them which might out them. Also, the employer has the right to access public records without notification to the future employee and without their consent. The employer absolutely cannot access the future employee’s medical records, however.

PARTNERS OF TRANS* PEOPLE

How can I support my trans* identified partner in their social transition?

If you are dating a trans* person who wants to physically transition, you should both talk about what this means to you as individuals and as partners, especially if you are in a committed relationship and/or a sexual relationship. *One partner transitioning means you are transitioning together.*

Have a lot of open discussion about how your partner wants to be referred to in public. If they want to be out to you, but no one else, it might be a better idea to use the name and pronouns others have been using for them (while you are both in public) until they are ready to be out. Do not assume what your partner wants or is comfortable with – talk about it. If you are uncomfortable using the new name or pronouns, talk about that, too. It is very important that you are on the same page and are respectful about where you all are in your learning processes.

One partner transitioning means you are transitioning together.

If your partner is interested in having friends and family members use a new name or pronouns, discuss how they would like you to handle people accidentally or purposefully using the incorrect name or pronouns.

Lastly, make sure you talk about how others' perception of you might change. For example, if one of you is cisgender, male-bodied, and masculine expressing and the trans* identified partner is female-bodied and masculine-expressing, people may begin reading you as a gay male/same-gender-loving male couple rather than a heterosexual couple as the trans* identified partner begins socially and/or physically transitioning. Be aware of how this may change your interactions with others and how you think you want to navigate this. This is especially important to consider if you are concerned about your safety.

Can someone get married if they are trans* identified?

The answer to this question depends on the person's legal gender marker and the definition of marriage in the state. If there are only two people requesting a marriage license and their gender markers are different (one says "F" and one says "M") based on their gender assigned at birth, then they will be allowed to get married. If partners get married while their gender markers are different and then one partner changes their gender marker so that they are both "F" or both "M", this will not automatically invalidate their marriage. However, it may complicate things. If partners have the same gender marker after they get married, they may have problems accessing health benefits from an employer or if one partner dies, the surviving partner may have difficulty accessing death benefits.

If partners have different gender markers after one partner changes their gender marker, there is no way to know for sure whether they will or will not be granted a marriage license. Some states have said this is illegal by defining gender by genetics or gender assigned at birth rather than a legal sex marker. Indiana does not have a law like this, but this is still a big gray area.

Can trans* people be religious and/or spiritual?

Yes! Identifying as transgender does not prevent anyone from being religious or spiritual and/or belonging to a faith-based community. Unfortunately, sometimes trans* people are excluded from faith-based communities. Some trans* people are religious/spiritual and others are not.



How can I support my trans* identified parent in their social transition?

Be honest and communicative, ask questions respectfully, and most importantly make sure your parent knows you will love and support them unconditionally. Even if you are unfamiliar with transgender identities or issues, let them know you are willing to learn. Use the name and pronouns they ask you to use and respectfully correct other friends and family if they use the incorrect name or pronouns. Talk to your parents about how they would like you to handle others using the incorrect pronouns or name, who they are out to and who they are not out to, and how else you can support them. Also, check out this great resource, TransParency at <http://www.transparency.org/>.

How can I support my trans* identified parent in their legal transition?

Ask your parents how you can support them through this process. If you are an adult with a job, you may be able to financially support them in this process. If your parent is financially stable enough to cover these expenses, they may ask you to come to court with them to get the court order for the name and/or gender marker changes.

How can I support my trans* identified parent in their physical transition?

Let them know you will love them unconditionally and do not ask questions about if or how they plan to alter their body. These are personal decisions that only affect them and their current or future partner(s). If they want to discuss their physical transition with you, they will. Offer to take them to and from doctor's appointments and/or care for them after surgeries if they opt for this. If your parent is less financially stable than you, offer to financially support them in their body modifications. If you are interested in learning more about what kinds of body modifications a trans* person may want, you can ask your parents for books and internet information to read about this and/or look it up for yourself.

What is your real name? Why didn't you tell me your real name?

Some trans* identified people choose to change their name and some do not. Many names are assumed to only be used by women and other names are assumed to only be used by men. This can create a lot of awkwardness for some people if their name does not reflect their gender identity and expression. For example, the name Tiffany is usually assumed to only be used by women. If someone is assigned "female" at birth, but they identify as male and appear male to others, it may feel very awkward to them to introduce themselves as Tiffany. If this person identifies as male, they may choose a more masculine name – like Thomas – or a more androgynous name – like Taylor – used by men and women.

All bodies welcome.

Are you going to change your name? Why?

A person's "real" name is the name they use in "real" life. Their real name is not their legal name, the name their parents or guardians gave them, or any name besides the person gives you. If someone goes by "Matt" but you later find out their legal name is "Matthew", no one asks why Matt didn't tell everyone their "real" name! That is because Matt's real name is the name they give everyone. The same is true even if the name someone gives you is very different than a name they used to go by. If you later find out a trans* person's name assigned at birth, do not ask/say something like "Why didn't you tell me your real name?" or "I can't believe that used to be your name!" or "This name fits you better/worse." Or "I like this name/that name better for you." If a person is ready for you to know their name history, they will tell you, and if not, that is their choice and their own private information. If they decide to tell you, it probably means that person trusts you, so be respectful.

Many people want to have the gender of their name be in line with their gender identity and others choose a gender neutral name to remove assumptions about their gender. Someone's name is the first thing they tell people about themselves when they meet someone and it is the first way people can begin understanding them as an individual. A person's name should be a point of pride, not awkwardness or humiliation.

Lastly, not everyone chooses a new name. Some people change a part of their name but not their whole name. If the person feels that their name reflects who they are, they may choose to keep the name they were given. Whatever their decision, support them by using the name they choose.

Are you changing your name to reject the name we (parents/guardians) picked for you?

No. Even if your child strongly dislikes the name they were raised with, it does not mean they are rejecting you or the time and love you put into picking a name for them. If your child chooses a new name, it only means they are taking care of themselves and making a change that is important to them. This decision is about them, not you.



How can I support my trans* identified child in their physical transition?

The most important part of supporting a child in their decisions regarding physically transitioning is communication. Make sure BOTH you and your child are very aware of what options exist, risks, and benefits, and talk about these things regularly. The amount of information you give your child may depend on the age of the child. How parents can and should handle the decision to transition with minors is a highly debated topic. Ultimately a decision should be reached with input from parents, the child, and a medical professional. If your child is close to puberty and is interested in physically transitioning in a direction different from their puberty, some families opt for a hormone suppressant, Lupron. This document is not suggesting for families to use or not to use Lupron, but just informing those interested that this option does exist.

If your child is not a minor and is interested in physically transitioning, it is more respectful not to ask questions about their decision to physically transition, especially whether they want to opt for genital altering surgeries. How an individual changes their body as an adult is their own decision. Instead, you should ask for resources about physically transitioning in general. If your child brings up changes they plan to make to their body, it is alright to ask respectful questions about how the process works and if there is any way you can support them. For example, if your child is a trans* man and wants to get a double mastectomy (removal of the breasts), it may be very helpful if you are willing to help them with traveling to and from their surgery and with household chores like cooking and cleaning during the time directly after their surgery.

What does it mean if my child says they are genderqueer, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, or not gender binary?

Many young people in particular are rejecting the idea that all people must be “male” or “female”. Each of these words is another way to describe a trans* identity that is not “male” or “female”, and this can be a complicated idea to understand. Even if you do not understand what this means, listen to your child and do some reading. There are now many books and websites dedicated to supporting parents as they learn to better understand their gender diverse children. For a start, check out one of these: *Raising My Rainbow* – <http://raisingmyrainbow.com/>
TransParent – <http://www.transparentstl.org/>
TransYouth Family Allies – <http://www.imatyfa.org/>

The first step in supporting your child is to let them know you are open to discussing transgender identities.

How can I support my trans* identified child in their legal transition?

You can read about the process of legal name and gender marker changes in another informational packet which you can access through Trans* Lafayette. One way you can support your child is by offering to cover the cost of the paperwork necessary to get their legal name and gender markers changed. Before doing this, make sure you become aware of any possible consequences for a legal gender marker change if you have gender-specific health insurance. For example, if your child was assigned “male” at birth and wants to get their gender marker changed to “F”, find out whether they will still be able to get a prostate exam covered by their health insurance.

Does identifying as trans* mean you are going to change your body? What is “transitioning”?

Every person’s body is personal and whether they decide to make any changes to it is their own decision. Whether a person decides to go on hormone replacement therapy or undergoes one or many surgeries, their decision will only affect them and possibly current or future partners. If you are a family member or friend, you should leave it up to the transgender person you know to decide whether they want to tell you if they are going to change their body.

Instead of asking how the person you know wants to change their body, you may ask how some trans* people choose to change their bodies in general. Body changes that have to do with someone getting their body in alignment with their gender identity is called transitioning. These changes are called transitioning because the body changes are usually gradual – a transition from one type of body to another.

Some people choose never to change their body and others choose to make many changes. Know that whatever the person closest to you chooses is what is right for them.

There are a lot of ways that someone can transition physically. Hormones are responsible for giving people “masculine” or “feminine” body characteristics. Testosterone is a hormone mostly responsible for giving someone facial hair and body hair, a deeper voice, and broader shoulders. Estrogen and progesterone are hormones mostly responsible for giving someone wider hips, certain body fat distribution, and less body hair and facial hair.

If someone is assigned “male” at birth and wants to appear more feminine, they may choose to get on hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This could involve getting on a testosterone suppressant (which stops your body from making testosterone) and getting on estrogen and

Support the trans* people in your life by accepting and loving them!

PARENTS OF TRANS* CHILDREN

How can I support my trans* identified child in their social transition?

The first step in supporting your child is to let them know you are open to discussing transgender identities. If your child is young, let them know you never mind them wearing ANY clothing they are comfortable wearing, even if others might disapprove. Regardless of the age of your child, let them know you will love them whether they are “male”, “female”, or any other gender. It is NEVER too late to begin letting your child know you will love them unconditionally. If your child does not know your views on trans* identities until they come out to you, make sure you let them know you will love them unconditionally when they come out to you. If your reaction when they come out is negative, let them know as soon as possible that you will love them unconditionally.

Use the name and pronouns they want you to use! Some people want to change their name, some want to change their pronouns, some people do both, and some do neither. Whatever your child decides, support them by using the name and pronouns they ask you to use.

Another way to support your child is to help them in public spaces. First talk with your child about how they would like you to support them. For example, if your child is in grade school, ask them if they would like you to talk to school administrators, teachers, and staff who may be working with your child to get their name and pronouns recognized publically. If your child would like this change, do so! Another big issue is restrooms. Work with your child and educators to figure out what restroom your child would like to use and whether a safe solution can be created for them at their school or other places. If you are interested in advocating for your child in the education system, check out an organization dedicated to this task at: www.glsen.org.

Lastly, if your child is a minor, offer to get them involved in an LGBTQ+ or trans* specific social/support group. It is important for young people to know they are not alone in their identity and that they have peers who identify in similar ways. You may also consider going to PFLAG meetings. PFLAG stands for “Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays”, but it serves family and friends of anyone in the larger LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, etc.) community.

progesterone medication. If someone is assigned “female” at birth and wants to appear more masculine, they may choose to get on hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This would involve taking testosterone, which will naturally suppress their body’s production of estrogen and progesterone. There are also a variety of surgeries a person can choose from (if they want surgery at all) to change their chest, face, genitals, and/or fat distribution.

Why would you do that to your body?

How someone changes their body is their own business and their own choice. It is not anyone else’s place to judge. While there are some risks associated with physically transitioning, there are risks associated with any medical procedure. The important thing is for the person who is transitioning to work closely with doctors to decrease risks and for those who are close to them in their life to support them through this process.

How do you have sex?

The same ways anyone else has sex! Sex is a personal experience and is different for each person regardless of what body parts a person has. The diversity in people’s bodies – whether they are trans* identified or not – is HUGE. No person’s body is exactly like anyone else’s and most individual’s bodies are very different from one another.

Never ask this question. Think about how you would feel if someone looked at you confused, as if they were trying to picture your genitals, and asked how you have sex? The question is often asked in a way that sounds like people cannot believe that anyone would want to have sex with a trans* person, that they don’t think trans* people are capable of having sex, or that there must be something wrong with a trans* person which makes them unable to have “good”, “moral”, or “normal” sex. All of these stereotypes and assumptions are not only untrue, but they are harmful to the wellbeing of trans* people and their partners.

How can I support my trans* identified friend in their physical transition?

If your trans* identified friend discloses to you that they would like some body modifications, you can offer to take them to and from doctor's appointments if you are able and/or help to take care of them or do house chores during their recovery if they opt for any surgeries. Do not ask what type of genitals your friend has or wants – this is personal and if they want you to know, they will tell you.



What should I do if my child, friend, or partner comes out to me as trans*?

Thank them for sharing such a personal part of their life with you! Thank them for having the courage to be open and honest with you even though there is so much stigma about transgender people. It is okay to have questions later, but it is very important to let that person know that you support them and appreciate them first.

Whether or not you understand transgender identities, it does not change the fact that that person is someone close to you and they see you as someone important to them. It is important that this person does not think your relationship is in jeopardy because they came out to you. They are taking the time to give you a chance to learn and understand an important part of their life – take the time to listen and learn with them.

Lastly, be honest about where you are in understanding trans* identities. Let them know if you need some time to learn and understand. Be patient with each other as you both learn.

Why is it important to support transgender people?

Trans* people are people first.

Support the trans* identified people in your life because they are worthy of your love and respect! Plus, people who are trans* identified are often misunderstood and it is important to offer the trans* identified people in your life the support they may not receive elsewhere.

Can I touch your... chest, butt, genitals, hair, etc, etc, etc.?

No! A person's body is their own and you never have a right to even ask to touch a person's body. If they want you to touch their body, they will ask you to. When you ask this question, not only do you invade a person's space, you also turn their body or body parts into objects instead of part of a PERSON. This is because the assumption behind this question is that the person or their body parts are strange or abnormal and that part of their body is so interesting or different it is worth treating them like a shiny toy instead of a person.

The only exception to this very important rule is if you are the partner of a trans* person. If you are a partner of a trans* person, please talk together about what body parts you and they are both comfortable touching. This includes non-sexual touching and should include everyone in the relationship. If touching your partner's chest is triggering or upsetting for them, don't do it. Everyone has kinds of touching they do and do not like, whether they are transgender identified or not. Talk about it for non-sexual and sexual touching. When it comes to sexual touching, make sure you have this discussion each time before you have sex or engage in any kind of sexual activity. Figure out what you are both comfortable with and what you are absolutely not comfortable with and agree on words or behaviors that mean "yes" or "go" and "no" or "stop".

In conclusion: never ask to touch a person's body out of curiosity. Only ask to touch a person's body if it is relevant to the specific to the relationship you have with that person.

Why do so many trans* people commit suicide, harm themselves, and/or are murdered?

Trans* people are not less mentally stable than cisgender people. Some reasons trans* people harm themselves, commit suicide, or die at abnormally high rates include: they are rejected by their family or friends, they are kicked out of their homes while they are minors and become homeless, they starve or are killed while homeless, they are denied jobs or homes they are qualified for because of their trans* status, they are denied access to health care or health insurance because of their trans* status, they are forced into risky street work that results in poor health and/or death. Because transgender people are often misunderstood as sick, dangerous, or "deserving to be punished", they are also often the victims of hate violence. These are the reasons it is so important for you to support the trans* people in your life. Do not assume that the trans* person or people in your life have other people who are supportive – you may be the only one!

FRIENDS OF TRANS* PEOPLE

How can I support my trans* identified friend in their social transition?

Use the name and pronouns your friend asks you to use and do not ask questions about how they may or may not want to change their body. Do ask questions about how you can support them. When it is safe to do so, stand up for your friend if you hear others make trans*phobic comments or being rude to your friend. Ask your friend if they would like you to gently correct people if they use the wrong name or pronouns. Get educated about trans* issues!

How can I support my trans* identified friend in their legal transition?

Ask your friend if they would like support with their legal transition if they tell you they are looking into this method of transition. Let them know you are happy to go with them to the judge to get their court order.