

TRANS 101

**For Significant Others, Partners, Friends, Family,
and Allies (SOFFAs) of Trans People**



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How Do I Use this Booklet?

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, gender non-conforming, or intersex people or the views of any organization that distributes this material. It should not be used as a legal document, legal aid, or replace medical/health information or legal advice given by a professional. This document was not made by any organization but may be offered through organizations as a supportive and educational material.

Who was this booklet made for?

This booklet was made for anyone who is interested in learning more about gender, transgender identities and experiences, and being a better ally, friend, family member, or partner/significant other to a trans person. The information in this booklet is mostly in a Q&A format and is directed towards people who have little or no understanding of trans experiences 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, someone with a trans gender history, or identify as intersex, 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 the author after 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, gender non-conforming, and intersex people – instead this is only an effort to raise awareness about some people’s experiences and offer support to trans people who would like a resource that they can give to those close to them.

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

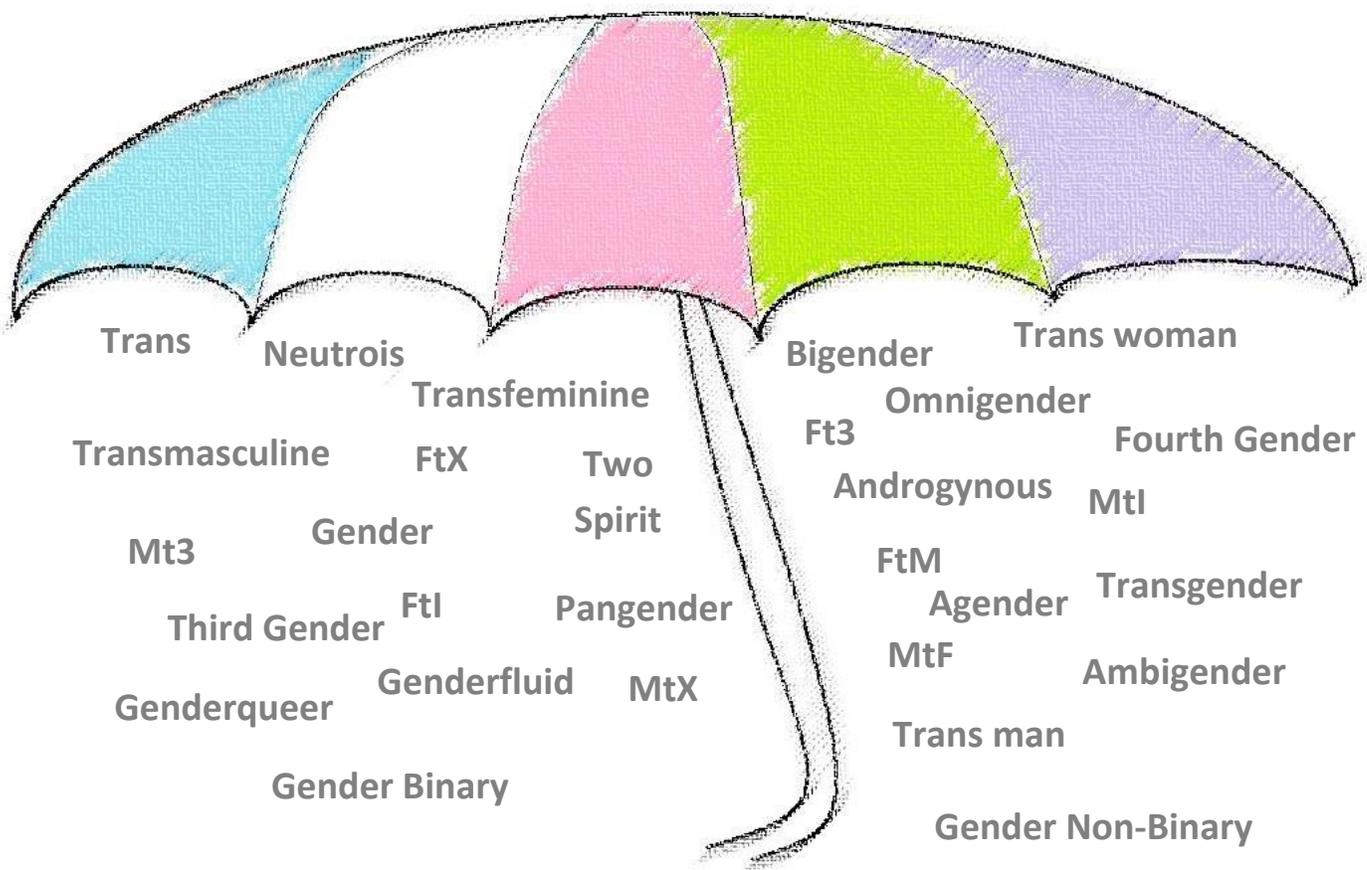
Sexual Identity: how a person describes their attraction towards others (not the same as gender identity)

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 is different than the gender they were assigned at birth. Sometimes you may see “transgender” shortened to “trans”, but both of these words mean basically the same thing. Someone who is assigned “female” at birth, and identifies as “male” might identify as transgender. Someone who is assigned “male” at birth, and identifies as “female” might identify as transgender. Many transgender people do not identify as male or female. Transgender is considered an “umbrella” term because there are many identities that fall under this term. Here are a few of the gender identities that fall under the trans umbrella:

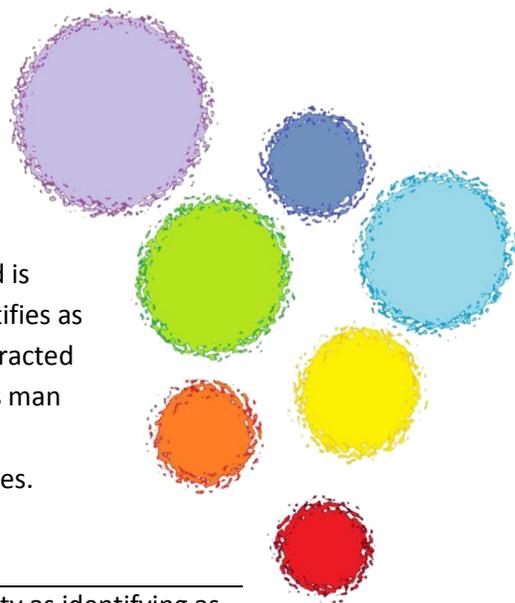


What does “cisgender” mean?

Cisgender is a term some people use to describe themselves when their gender identity and assigned gender at birth are in line with one another. An example of a cisgender identity might include someone assigned “male” at birth 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 identity. If someone identifies as a trans woman (assigned male at birth, and 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, and 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/romantic identities and are words used to describe the way a person feels attraction. Transgender is a gender identity and is a word used to describe the way a person understands their body in a social context. That means a transgender person can also be SGL, gay, lesbian. A lesbian, SGL, or gay person might also identify as transgender. However, 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 identifies as female and was assigned “male” at birth. 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.

Is a trans man actually a woman or a man?

A trans man is a *person* who identifies as male and was assigned “female” at birth. 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.

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 single 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? If changing their body or name is going to make them more comfortable or happy, why shouldn't they?

For those who begin to understand their gender as being 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. Doing anything without meaning it is the same as lying. If someone is assigned “female” at birth and 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.

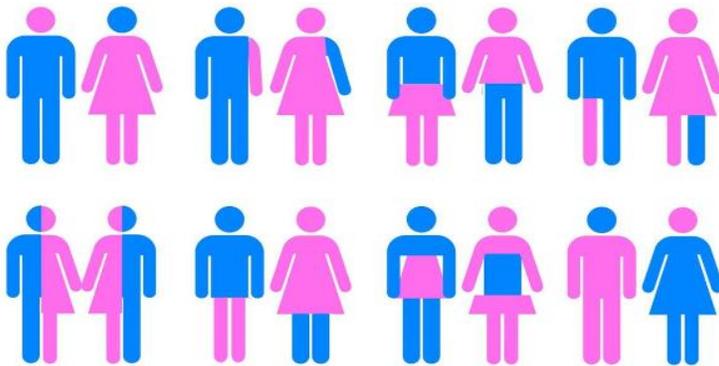


Image from B.J. Murphy at the Institute of Emerging Ethics and Technologies at Trinity College in CT

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.

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

This is a very personal question because the words “man” and “woman” might have very different meanings 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 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 transgender, believe them and support them – don't question whether their identity is "real" or valid. They know themselves and now they are entrusting you with 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 identify one way their whole life; 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 experiences and life.



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

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 freer 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.

A special note for parents of transgender youth: There is no biological "test" for being transgender. Transgender people do not have a genetic mutation or a hormone imbalance that makes them transgender, which means you should not ask or force your child to undergo testing. If your child chooses to physically transition (go on hormones or undergo some surgery or surgeries), doctors will perform many blood tests to ensure that they are generally healthy. However, there is no "transgender test" to determine if your child is transgender. It is important to trust your child and learn alongside them instead of trying to find "prove" whether they are or are not transgender.

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. 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 transgender that is inherently more difficult than being not being transgender. The only things that make being transgender more challenging 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 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 AUTHENTICALLY by being themselves. You can make this process easier by listening and supporting them!

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 and ignorance of others. Support the trans people in your life by loving them and keeping communication open!

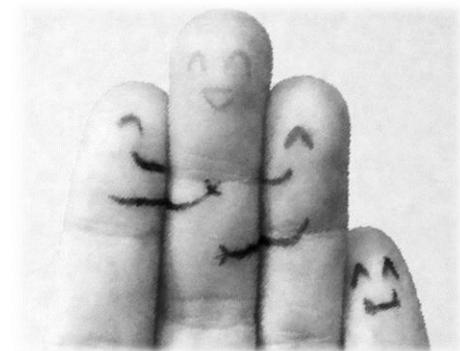
Which restroom do you use?

Trans people use the restroom that they feel most comfortable and safest in, the same as cisgender people. Many states have laws that explicitly state a person must use the restroom that is in alignment with their gender marker. If a trans person identifies as male, they may choose to use the men’s restroom. However, if they are seen as female, it may be unsafe or seen as illegal to use the men’s restroom so they may use the women’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 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 transgender?

Yes, being trans does not inherently prevent anyone from working and getting paid for their work. However, trans people do disproportionately experience harassment and discrimination during their job searches, hiring process, and employment. 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. 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.



Can someone get legally married if they are transgender?

Yes, as a result of the Supreme Court decision published on July 26th, 2015, couples of any sex and gender may now acquire legal marriage certificates. While it is legal for faith-based institutions to deny access to religious marriage ceremonies at their specific places of worship, many faith communities do offer services to same-sex partners and partnerships with one or multiple transgender partners.

For those in Indigenous Nations on Turtle Island, each Native Nation also has its own laws and policies regarding marriage. Here is a partial listing for Nations that allow or do not allow same-sex marriages: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_under_United_States_tribal_jurisdictions. The authors of this document recognize that this listing is incomplete and written from a colonialist perspective! If you can send us information about partnership policies in Indigenous Nations written by and for Indigenous people, we would greatly appreciate it!

Are you going to change your name? Why?

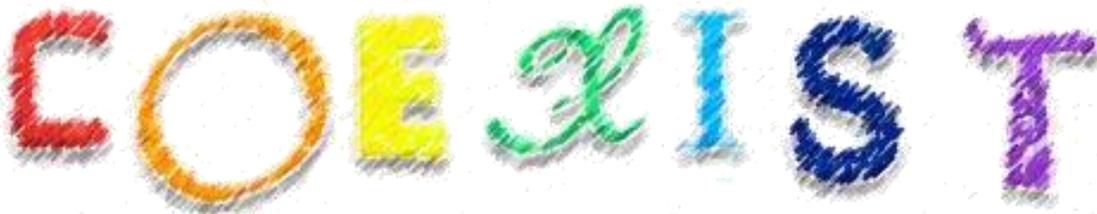
Some trans people choose to change their name and some do not. Many names are assumed to only be used by women and other names are assumed to only be used by men. This can create a lot of awkwardness for some people if their name does not reflect their gender identity and expression. For example, the name Tiffany is usually assumed to only be used by women. If someone is assigned “female” at birth and 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.

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

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 name 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 ask to go by.



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. Remember that this decision is about them, not you.

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, remember that 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 often called transitioning. These changes are called transitioning because the body changes are usually gradual – a transition from one form of

All bodies welcome.

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, their decisions are 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, softer skin, and a certain body fat distribution.

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 mostly stops their body from making testosterone) and getting on estrogen and 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. If someone chooses to modify their body by physically transitioning, it is because they understand that doing so will improve their quality of life and allow them to express themselves in the way they identify. 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 has sex! Sex is a personal experience and is different for each person regardless of body parts. The diversity in people's bodies – whether they are transgender or not – is HUGE. No person's body is exactly like anyone else's. Plus, the activities and positions any person enjoys or does not enjoy depends on that person, not necessarily their body.

Never ask this question to another person. 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.



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 and/or spiritual while others are not.

What should I do if my adult-age 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 surrounding 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. Be patient with each other as you both learn.

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

No! A person's body is their own and you do not have a right touch a person's body or ask to touch a person's body without some previous relationship. 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 or not. 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 harm themselves or get harmed by others?

Trans people are not less mentally stable than cisgender people. Some reasons trans people harm themselves, commit suicide, or experience high rates of violence include: they are rejected by their family or friends, they are kicked out of their homes while they are minors and become homeless, they are harmed 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 survival street work that could result in poor health and/or violence. 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!

Why is it important to support transgender people?

Trans people are people first.

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

Friends of Trans People

How can I support my trans 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 transphobic 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 experiences!

How can I support my trans 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.

How can I support my trans 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.



Parents of Trans Children

How can I support my trans 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 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 came out was negative, let them know as soon as possible that you love them unconditionally.



Many parents go through a process of grieving when their child comes out because they may feel they are losing their son for a daughter, losing their daughter for a son, etc. If you feel this way, be patient with yourself and give yourself time to process your child’s coming out. Trans people sometimes get impatient if parents’ feel this way, so if you decide to talk about your feelings with your child, it is important to let them know that going through grieving is just part of your process to supporting them. Grieving does not mean you are unsupportive or unwilling to learn.

One way of showing your support is using 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 advocate for them in public spaces, especially if they are a minor. 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 they would like to use a different name or different pronouns, talk with administrators, teachers, and staff. 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.

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 the above 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/>

How can I support my trans **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.

How can I support my trans **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 (18 or older!) 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 male chest reconstruction surgery, 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.

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

Children of Trans People

How can I support my trans 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 experiences, 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, TransParenity at [HZ+^%ZE](#).

How can I support my trans 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 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 choose, you can ask your parents for books and internet information to read about this and/or look it up for yourself.

Siblings of Trans People

How can I support my trans sibling in their social transition?

Siblings of trans people have a lot of power to support their trans siblings, especially with other family members. Siblings can help correct family members and peers when people use the incorrect pronouns or name and help make sure their sibling has access to a safe restroom in public spaces, like school. Especially in families with unaccepting parents and other family members, it can be critical that siblings show support for one another.

If siblings are adults, they can continue to advocate for and support their trans siblings at family gatherings and other events if people are unsupportive or unaware of how to be supportive. Siblings should talk to their transgender sibling about how they would like support rather than assuming, especially since some trans people may use different names or pronouns in different situations for safety reasons.

Parents and guardians who have multiple children under the age of 18 should be sure to discuss transgender identities with all the children. Children often hear derogatory things said about transgender people and gender non-conforming identities at school and it is important for parents to be ready to facilitate a discussion about these issues. Children often have to process how they can be friends with a sibling they love and with their friends who may be intolerant and ignorant of transgender issues. Talk early and often!

How can I support my trans sibling in their legal transition?

If you are minors, help them do research about the process and implications of getting a legal name change or gender marker change. Finding all this information alone can be daunting. Sometimes you can also help find information to advocate with parents. Some parents do not want their children to get a legal name or gender marker change mostly because they are unaware of the process or the consequences of these decisions. Either way, getting as much information as possible will help your trans sibling make the best decision for themselves. If parents are unsupportive of their child getting legal changes to their documents, helping your sibling learn about the process can also help them prepare for the time when they become a legal adult and have the power to make these changes independently. If you are both adults, you may be able to offer to go with your sibling to get legal documents changed, offer to support them financially to make these changes, etc.

How can I support my trans sibling in their physical transition?

If your trans identified sibling lets you know that they are looking into physically transitioning, you can help them do research about doctors who prescribe hormones or do surgeries, the effects of hormones and surgeries, and be someone they can talk with to discuss what kind of physical transition they are interested in. Do not ask whether they are interested in physically transitioning unless they bring it up and ask respectful, non-invasive questions. You can also offer to take them to and from doctors' appointments and help take care of them after surgical procedures if they get any.

Partners of Trans People

How can I support my trans 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.

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

One partner transitioning means you are transitioning together.

or pronouns.

Lastly, make sure you talk about how others' perception of you might change. For example, if one of you is cisgender, assigned male, and masculine expressing and one partner is transgender, assigned female 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 partner begins socially and/or physically transitioning. Think about and talk about how this may change your interactions with others and how you think you want to navigate this. This is particularly complicated when there are more than two partners in the relationship and especially important to consider if you are concerned about your safety.

How can I support my trans 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 all 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 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 partners 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 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 each 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. In relationships with more than two partners, sometimes the person transitioning is comfortable with each partner in different ways because of differences in bodies, identities, or personality. Respect each other's decisions and talk about how you are doing – often.

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

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 each 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!



Online Resources

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>

Resources in Indiana

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? You can find information about support groups, advocacy organizations, and much more by going to the Indiana Transgender Network website: <http://indianatransgendernetwork.com/>. The Indiana Transgender Network “aggregates resources available to transgender and gender diverse people living in Indiana. Our goal is to make it easier for people making a gender transition or trying to understand the subject of gender identity to find counselors, medical resources, legal information, support groups, advocacy organizations and other help on their journey.”

About the Contributors

Authored by Skye Brown with the support of many community members
Contributions & Editing by Aiden Powell

About Skye:

i'm a loud and proud queer –
of the transmasculine genderfluid variety.
i'm a pan femme butch,
a survivor and a fighter.
i'm an activist for respect and a public disturbance.
i'm in love with humanity
and determined to support the end to all oppression.
i'm a fabulous unicorn made
of glitter and spice, and civil disobedience
coming to a public demonstration near you.
i'm a partner and a sibling, a dog parent, and a hopeful
romantic
i believe in supporting bodies and bending minds
and my life is your life since your life is my life's advocacy
i'm a second generation American
and a first generation revolutionary,
walking on the supportive shoulders of centuries of
activists before.
i'm bilingual and bad at both languages
and a feminist who demands radical change.
i learned how to DREAM with undocumented queer
students of color in Texas
and now strive to create a nexus
of LGBTQ+ empowerment in Indiana,
to support a state without fear
or violence, where love knows no bounds.
Will you join me
to create communities free
from violence and oppression,
take us in a new direction
of reflection and action, social change
until there is no more hate, only love to exchange?

If you want to reach Skye in their capacity as the
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About Aiden:

Aiden attended Texas A&M
University where he got his bachelors in
Anthropology with a cultural and applied focus.
During his time at Texas A&M, he advocated
tirelessly for LGBTQ+ student rights by marching
on campus, speaking in front of student senate
meetings, and mentoring incoming students. He
will soon graduate from Purdue University with
his masters in Anthropology where he studied
applied medical anthropology. Aiden's master's
project involved working with students and staff
at the Purdue University Student Health (PUSH)
center to increase the capacity of the center and
staff to serve LGBTQ+ students. During Aiden's
time at Purdue, he has successfully led the
establishment of Purdue's first LGBTQ living and
learning community called the Diversity in
Gender and Sexuality Studies Learning
Community and has successfully led the
movement for getting hormone replacement
therapy and surgical benefits covered on student
health insurance. Aiden is accomplished in policy
development and implementation, project design
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experiences and degree as the inaugural Program
Coordinator at the Purdue LGBTQ Center. You
can reach Aiden at powell61@purdue.edu.

**As domestic partners, Skye and Aiden
have dedicated their relationship to supporting
each other's development as social justice
advocates and activists. Together they strive to
develop their communities' capacity for social
change - synergistically.**