



My child is transgender... now what?!

Finding out your child identifies as a gender other than the sex assigned at birth (that's when the doctor says, "it's a boy") can be overwhelming. Many have initial reactions that are fraught with emotions, including regretful outbursts that leave you and your child upset, sad, frightened and scared. Many parents feel an immediate sense of loss, wondering, "Where did my daughter go," or a sense of disbelief, "You will always be my son, no matter what." Your feelings are your feelings.

However, here is the cautionary tale. Trans youth are 9x more likely to attempt suicide than their peers and 57% without parent support attempt suicide vs 4% who have accepting, supportive parents. Youth report being afraid to come out because they fear that they will no longer be loved, they will be kicked out of their home, they will be refused food and more.

You are the parent. It is your job to love your child unconditionally. That means that you keep your feelings private (find a safe person or group so you can share safely) and demonstrate that you are there for this person you are raising. How do you do that when you feel so lost?

Let's start with this great resource put together by the Biden Foundation, Gender Spectrum, and the Movement Advancement Project - [Family Support: Resources for Families of Transgender & Gender Diverse Children](#). They provide everything from terminology to stats on why family acceptance is vital, links to local and national resources, and much much more! [The Family Acceptance Project](#) also has great resources to check into.

Here's a bit of advice that is pretty basic and not hard to implement. **Let your child take the lead.** As parents, we want to fix everything; we kiss boo-boos, we are the problem-solvers, we are the ones to make things better when our children are having a bad day. If your child comes to you and asks you to start using new pronouns, use them. Yes, it will feel different and hard. For some, they avoid using pronouns until it feels a little more natural. Practice, practice, practice. Often, the outward appearance is the first thing to change. They are working at adjusting their gender expression to more closely match the way they identify. There is no harm in agreeing to a haircut (it will grow back) or allowing your child to wear clothes from a different store or department. If affordability is an issue, many find great clothing items (often with the tags still attached) at the local thrift store.



Our Executive Director, Roz Keith, chronicled her son, Hunter's, transition and what the experience was like for her as a parent in the [Call Him Hunter](#) blog. You may find it helpful to read their story as your family as its transition journey.

Finding support in your area can be daunting. If your child is already seeing a counselor, social worker or psychologist, it's important to be sure that the professional is trained to work with trans adolescents. Not all mental health professionals have this training and without the right kind of support, the effects on your child could be detrimental to their mental health. Also, many parents find that seeing someone is helpful. It's a way to work through your own feelings without burdening your child. When children feel that they've done something to make their parents upset, they feel guilt. The last thing they want is to make you unhappy. So, celebrate who they are. Acknowledge that they were courageous enough to tell you. Let them know that sharing their truth is a characteristic to be admired. Then, separately, work through your feelings. Keep in mind, you haven't lost a child. They are still who they are personality wise; they likely have the same hobbies and interests. The best by-product of all the support is that you will have a happy child.

We encourage you to check out the Stand with Trans [support groups](#) for parents, tweens, teens, and nonbinary young adults (free!) and the [Schools in Transition Guide](#) for help navigating the K-12 school system.