



Parents Guide To LGBTQ+/LGBTIA+

FAQs To Help Understand The Community

Understanding

It is common for LGBTQ/LGBTIA teens to feel scared or nervous during the coming out stage. Some can start to feel isolated from their peers, especially if they feel that they don't fit in or are given a hard time for being different. Just remember that children who feel loved and accepted for who they are have a much easier time. Below are things you can do to make sure you can offer support:

- Play an important role advocating for safe spaces where their child can explore interests without judgment or stereotypes.
- Support diverse friendships and social involvement without focusing on expectations around gender.
- Provide exposure to people working and enjoying activities outside of conventional gender expectations.
- Engage in conversations and check regularly with your children about their interests, friend groups, romantic attractions, and any bullying or teasing that may be taking place.

What if your child is not ready to come out yet?

Teens may accept that they are LGBTQ/LGBTIA but not yet ready to start sharing this information with anyone yet. Some will feel comfortable being open about their identity, while other teens may not tell anyone for a long time. Teens may look for clues on how you feel about their gender identity and sexual orientation. Speaking positively about LGBTQ/LGBTIA celebrities or current events you will let them know you are supportive of their identity. Parents and families can assist in the following ways:

- When your child discloses their identity to you, respond in an affirming, supportive way. Understand that although gender identity is not able to be changed, it often is revealed over time as people discover more about themselves.
- Accept and love your child as they are. Try to understand what they are feeling and experiencing. Even if there are disagreements, they will need your support and validation to develop into healthy teens and adults.
- Stand up for your child when they are mistreated. Do not minimize the social pressure or bullying your child may be facing. See [How You Can Help Your Child Avoid & Address Bullying](#).
- Make it clear that slurs or jokes based on gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation are not tolerated. Express your disapproval of these types of jokes or slurs when you encounter them in the community or media.
- Be on the lookout for danger signs that may indicate a need for mental health support such as anxiety, insecurity, depression, low self-esteem, and any emotional problems in your child and others who may not have a source of support otherwise.
- Connect your child with LGBTQ/LGBTIA organizations, resources, and events. It is important for them to know they are not alone.
- Celebrate diversity in all forms. Provide access to a variety of books, movies, and materials—including those that positively represent gender diverse individuals. Point out LGBTQ/LGBTIA celebrities and role models who stand up for the LGBTQ/LGBTIA community, and people in general who demonstrate bravery in the face of social stigma.
- Support your child's self-expression. Engage in conversations with them around their choices of clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, friends, and room decorations.
- Reach out for education, resources, and support if you feel the need to deepen your own understanding of LGBTQ/LGBTIA youth experiences.

Gender Identity/Expression vs. Sexual Orientation

Being transgender doesn't say anything about a person's sexual or romantic orientation. Just like we can't assume a person's sexual or romantic orientation based on their outwardly cisgender appearance, we also can't assume what a transgender individual's sexual orientation will be. The only way to know is if they share their orientation with you.

Using the pronouns preferred by an individual is an important part of showing that person respect and support.

If you're unsure of what pronouns a person prefers, ask them. If you're unsure which pronouns to use, use the plural gender-neutral pronouns (they/theirs/them), even if you're referring to a singular person.

- Some possibilities include:
- He/his/him
- He/their/them
- She/her/hers
- She/theirs/them
- They/theirs/them
- Zie/Zir/Zirs/Zirself
- Zie, zir, zirs, and zirself are gender-neutral singular pronouns that some prefer in the trans community. Zie is pronounced /zee/, and zir is pronounced /z-ir/, like sir but with a z.

If your child has asked you to use pronouns that differ from the ones typically associated with their sex assigned at birth, let them know you will do your best to use them as requested.

Of course, you will sometimes make a mistake and use the wrong pronouns. Changing the way you've referred to a person for many years isn't easy. But making an effort to use the pronouns they request is an important part of supporting your child.

Additional ways to offer support:

- Let them know you love them as they are
- Use their chosen pronouns
- Use their chosen name
- Go to pride with them
- Advocate for them
- Educate yourself on the LGBTQ+/LGBTIA+ world
- Refer to their partner as their partner - not

- their “friend”
- Don’t imply or say to them that it’s “just a phase” they will outgrow
- Get them in a support group (**SAGA!**) or get them counseling if they are struggling
- Find counseling for yourself

NO MATTER what our differences are, everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity!

- **We cannot accept ignorance**
- **We cannot accept intolerance**
- **We cannot accept name-calling**
- **We must all respect each other**
- **We must all accept others**
- **We must all be tolerant of others**
- **We must all be allies**

We are ALL the same – NO MATTER™! We are ALL people!

CELEBRATE our differences and **HONOR** our similarities! **NO MATTER™!**

Definitions

Term	Definition
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Sex	An assignment that is made at birth, usually male or female, typically on the basis of external genital anatomy but sometimes on the basis of internal gonads, chromosomes, or hormone levels
Gender identity	A person's deep internal sense of being female, male, a combination of both, somewhere in between, or neither, resulting from a multifaceted interaction of biological traits, environmental factors, self-understanding, and cultural expectations
Gender expression	The external way a person expresses their gender, such as with clothing, hair, mannerisms, activities, or social roles
Gender perception	The way others interpret a person's gender expression
Gender diverse	A term that is used to describe people with gender behaviors, appearances, or identities that are incongruent with those culturally assigned to their birth sex; gender-diverse individuals may refer to themselves with many different terms, such as transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, ⁷ gender fluid, gender creative, gender independent, or noncisgender. "Gender diverse" is used to acknowledge and include the vast diversity of gender identities that exists. It replaces the former term, "gender nonconforming," which has a negative and exclusionary connotation.
Transgender	A subset of gender-diverse youth whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex and generally remains persistent, consistent, and insistent over time; the term "transgender" also encompasses many other labels individuals may use to refer to themselves.
Cisgender	A term that is used to describe a person who identifies and expresses a gender that is consistent with the culturally defined norms of the sex they were assigned at birth
Agender	A term that is used to describe a person who does not identify as having a particular gender
Affirmed gender	When a person's true gender identity, or concern about their gender identity, is communicated to and validated from others as authentic

MTF; affirmed female; trans female	Terms that are used to describe individuals who were assigned male sex at birth but who have a gender identity and/or expression that is asserted to be more feminine
FTM; affirmed male; trans male	Terms that are used to describe individuals who were assigned female sex at birth but who have a gender identity and/or expression that is asserted to be more masculine
Gender dysphoria	A clinical symptom that is characterized by a sense of alienation to some or all of the physical characteristics or social roles of one's assigned gender; also, gender dysphoria is the psychiatric diagnosis in the <i>DSM-5</i> , which has focus on the distress that stems from the incongruence between one's expressed or experienced (affirmed) gender and the gender assigned at birth.
Gender identity disorder	A psychiatric diagnosis defined previously in the <i>DSM-IV</i> (changed to "gender dysphoria" in the <i>DSM-5</i>); the primary criteria include a strong, persistent cross-sex identification and significant distress and social impairment. This diagnosis is no longer appropriate for use and may lead to stigma, but the term may be found in older research.
Sexual orientation	A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender(s) to which they are attracted; sexual orientation and gender identity develop separately.

SEX-U-AL AND GEN-DER IDEN-TI-TY TERMS TO KNOW

AGEN-DER Describes a per-son who does not iden-ti-fy as male or female or some com-bi-na-tion of male and female. Some agen-der indi-vid-u-als see themselves as gen-der-less, while oth-ers see them-selves as gen-der neutral.

ALLY Describes a per-son who sup-ports, both pub-licly and pri-vate-ly, the LGBTQ com-mu-ni-ty and equal-i-ty in its many forms. Het-ero-sex-u-al and cis-gen-der peo-ple can be allies, as well as indi-vid-u-als from with-in the LGBTQ community.

ASEX-U-AL Describes a per-son who is not sex-u-al-ly attract-ed oth-ers and has no desire to engage in sex-u-al behav-ior. Asex-u-al-i-ty dif-fers from celiba-cy in that a per-son who is celi-bate is sex-u-al-ly attract-ed to oth-ers but choos-es to abstain from sex.

BIGEN-DER Describes a per-son who has two gen-ders. Peo-ple who are bigen-der may expe-ri-ence two gen-der iden-ti-ties at the same time or at dif-fer-ent times. These gen-der iden-ti-ties can be bina-ry — male and female — or include non-bi-na-ry identities.

BISEX-U-AL Describes a per-son who is attract-ed to both men and women. A per-son does not need to have had spe-cif-ic sex-u-al expe-ri-ences — or any sex-u-al expe-ri-ence — to iden-ti-fy as bisexual.

CIS-GEN-DER Describes a per-son whose gen-der iden-ti-ty match-es the sex — male or female — orig-i-nal-ly iden-ti-fied on their birth cer-tifi-cate (i.e., peo-ple who are not trans-gen-der). Cis-gen-der, which is pro-nounced sis-gen-der, describes only a per-son's gen-der iden-ti-ty — not their sex-u-al or roman-tic attractions.

ENBY Describes a per-son who does not iden-ti-fy as exclu-sive-ly male or exclu-sive-ly female and usu-al-ly prefers “they” as a pro-noun. Enby is the pho-net-ic pro-nun-ci-a-tion of “NB,” which stands for non-bi-na-ry. Not all non-bi-na-ry indi-vid-u-als pre-fer or use this term.

GAY Describes a per-son who is attract-ed, emo-tion-al-ly and/or phys-i-cal-ly, to some-one of the same gen-der. The term can be used by men, women or indi-vid-u-als who iden-ti-fy as non-bi-na-ry. A per-son does not need a spe-cif-ic sex-u-al expe-ri-ence — or any sex-u-al expe-ri-ence — to iden-ti-fy as gay.

GEN-DER A social con-struct used to clas-si-fy a per-son as a man, woman or some oth-er iden-ti-ty. Fun-da-men-tal-ly dif-fer-ent from sex assigned at birth, gen-der is often close-ly relat-ed to the role that a per-son plays or is expect-ed to play in society.

GEN-DER AFFIRM-ING SURGERY A sur-gi-cal pro-ce-dure that enables an individual's body to be more con-gru-ent with their gen-der iden-ti-ty. Also referred to as sex reas-sign-ment surgery or gen-der con-firm-ing surgery.

GEN-DER DYSPHORIA Describes the extreme dis-com-fort that a per-son feels because their assigned sex at birth does not match their gen-der iden-ti-ty. This sense of unease or dis-sat-is-fac-tion can cause depres-sion and anx-i-ety and neg-a-tive-ly impact an individual's dai-ly life.

GEN-DER EXPRESSION How indi-vid-u-als com-mu-ni-cate their gen-der to oth-ers through their cloth-ing, speech, man-ner-isms and oth-er fac-tors. Gen-der expres-sion is not the same thing as gen-der iden-ti-ty. A per-son can express one gen-der yet iden-ti-fy with another.

GEN-DER FLUID Describes a per-son whose gen-der expres-sion or gen-der iden-ti-ty — or both — changes over time. Not every-one whose gen-der iden-ti-ty or expres-sion changes iden-ti-fies as gen-der fluid.

GEN-DER IDENTITY A person's inter-nal iden-ti-fi-ca-tion as male, female, some-thing in between or some-thing oth-er than the two con-ven-tion-al gen-der options. A person's gen-der iden-ti-ty is not vis-i-ble to oth-ers and can match or dif-fer from their assigned sex at birth.

GEN-DER NONCONFORMING Describes a per-son who does not adhere to the tra-di-tion-al expec-ta-tions — in terms of their appear-ance or behav-ior — of their assigned gen-der. Some of these indi-vid-u-als iden-ti-fy as trans-gen-der but oth-ers, for exam-ple, mas-cu-line les-bians, do not.

HET-ERO-SEX-U-AL Describes a per-son who is attract-ed — phys-i-cal-ly and emo-tion-al-ly — to indi-vid-u-als of the oppo-site sex. Oth-er-wise known as a straight person.

HOMO-SEX-U-AL Describes a per-son who is attract-ed — phys-i-cal-ly and emo-tion-al-ly — to peo-ple of the same sex. This term is out-dat-ed and dis-fa-vored in the LGBTQ community.

INTER-SEX Describes a per-son born with sex char-ac-ter-is-tics that are not typ-i-cal for male or female bod-ies. Sex char-ac-ter-is-tics are phys-i-cal fea-tures relat-ing to sex — includ-ing chro-mo-somes, gen-i-tals, hor-mones and oth-er repro-duc-tive anato-my — as well as sec-ondary fea-tures that emerge from puber-ty. Inter-sex is an umbrel-la term, and inter-sex char-ac-ter-is-tics and traits are not always appar-ent or iden-ti-fied at birth.

LES-BIAN Describes a woman who is attract-ed, emo-tion-al-ly and/or phys-i-cal-ly, to oth-er women. A woman does not need a spe-cif-ic sex-u-al expe-ri-ence — or any sex-u-al expe-ri-ence — to iden-ti-fy as a lesbian.

LGBTQ An acronym used to describe les-bian, gay, bisex-u-al, trans-gen-der, queer or ques-tion-ing per-sons or the com-mu-ni-ty. Avoid using the term “gay com-mu-ni-ty,” as it does not accu-rate-ly account for the community's diversity.

NON-BI-NA-RY Describes a per-son whose gen-der iden-ti-ty falls out-side of the two-gen-der con-struct (male or female). For exam-ple, non-bi-na-ry can describe an indi-vid-ual whose gen-der changes over time, who does not iden-ti-fy as male or female or who asso-ci-ates with ele-ments of both gen-ders. Some indi-vid-u-als who iden-ti-fy as non-bi-na-ry pre-fer the term enby.

PAN-SEX-U-AL Describes a per-son who is attract-ed to — or has the poten-tial to be attract-ed to — peo-ple of any gen-der or gen-der iden-ti-ty. This attrac-tion can be emo-tion-al or physical.

QUEER An adjective used by some people, particularly younger people, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual. Queer was once used as a pejorative term and has been reclaimed by some — but not all — members of the LGBTQ community.

QUESTIONING Describes a person who is still discovering and exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or some combination thereof. Using this term enables an individual to identify as part of the LGBTQ community while avoiding other labels and recognizing that their process of self-identification is still underway.

SEX The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, babies are assigned a sex that typically corresponds with their external anatomy. Yet an individual's sex is influenced by a larger combination of factors, including their chromosomes, genes, hormones, reproductive organs and secondary sex characteristics.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION An enduring emotional and/or physical attraction (or non-attraction) to other people. Sexual orientation is fluid and encompasses a variety of labels, including gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual and asexual.

SOGIE An acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Every person has a sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

STRAIGHT Describes a man who is attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men. Can be used as a synonym for heterosexual.

TRANS-GENDER Describes a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

TRANS-GENDER (OR TRANS) MAN Describes a person who was assigned a female sex at birth but identifies as male. This person may or may not actively identify as trans.

TRANS-GENDER (OR TRANS) WOMAN Describes a person who was assigned a male sex at birth but identifies as female. This person may or may not actively identify as trans.

TRANSITION A complex process by which transgender people align their anatomy (medical transition) and gender expression (social transition) with their gender identity. Transitioning is a multiple-step process that occurs over a long period of time. It can include such steps as using a different name, using new pronouns, dressing differently, updating legal documents, hormone therapy and surgery. The exact steps involved in a person's transition varies.

Sources:

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