

The Gender Conversation: A Toolkit for Parents & Guardians of Awesome Humans



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Understanding Gender: Important Terms & Definitions

Is “Gender” even real? It absolutely is, and it’s important! Talking about gender with your kids can be challenging, especially when you’re unsure about which terms to use. But when it comes to talking to kids, it pays to know the real scoop!

Here are some key definitions to help us communicate more effectively:

Non-Binary: A term for people who do not identify exclusively as male or female.

Gender Identity: A person’s deeply felt sense of their own gender, which could be female, male, both, neither, or another gender they are most comfortable with.

Gender Expression: How someone expresses their gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, and voice.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The sex listed on a person’s original birth certificate, typically based on physical genitalia present at birth.

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Nonconforming: When someone’s gender identity or expression does not fit typical expectations of male or female.

Cisgender: A term for people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

Got Questions? We’ve Got Answers!

You probably have questions about your child’s gender or gender expression, and it’s important for parents and guardians to feel comfortable asking questions and seeking answers.

Here are some common questions parents and guardians often have:

Is There a Way to Tell if My Child is Transgender or Gender Nonconforming?

There is no definitive test or checklist. Your child’s way of expressing their identity depends on their age, developmental level, and their understanding of gender. Listen to your child as they know themselves best. Many children express their identity directly by saying, “I am a boy,” or “I am a

girl,” rather than only through clothing choices or toy preferences.

I Thought There Were Only Two Genders, What Has Changed? This is a common misconception, and it’s totally understandable to feel confused. Our understanding of gender has expanded in recent years, and this is a good thing. Gender isn’t about sex (male or female), it regards the social, cultural, and behavioral aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity. You can also think of it like colors, we don’t just have primary colors, in fact, a full spectrum exists. Similarly, gender isn’t simply the colors blue or pink, there are many shades in between – and they’re all beautiful.

Is It Just a Phase? This varies as everyone experiences their gender differently. If your child’s gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth, it is likely not a phase, although their understanding and expression of gender may evolve over time.

I Feel Like I’m Losing My Child, What Can I Do? It’s normal to experience feelings of loss and grief. Seek support from groups like PFLAG, Trans Youth Equality Foundation, or Stand with Trans. Remember, your child needs your support during this time of change.

Did I Cause My Child to Become Transgender or Gender Nonconforming? No, you did nothing to cause your child’s gender identity. Just as you cannot change someone’s eye color or height, you cannot change their gender identity. The best thing you can do is support and love them as they are.

Is There a Way I Can Support My Child? Show your child that they are loved and accepted. Research indicates that acceptance leads to happier and healthier lives for transgender and gender nonconforming children.

What Will My Family and Friends Think? First, find out if your child wants their gender identity shared and how they prefer it to be communicated. Practice what you will say and consider the potential reactions of others. Start by speaking with someone you believe will be supportive. Online groups for parents of transgender and gender nonconforming children can also be helpful.

Gender Affirmation and Medical Transition

Some kids may choose to make significant changes to affirm their gender identity – which can include social, medical, and legal changes. Here are some options:

Social Gender Affirmation: Includes using a different name and pronouns and changing clothing and hairstyles.

Medical Gender Affirmation: May involve puberty blockers, hormones, and/or surgery.

Legal Gender Affirmation: Involves changing one’s name and gender marker on legal documents.

Medical Transition Options

Puberty Blockers: Medications that temporarily stop puberty. Effects are reversible.

Testosterone: Hormone used to create more masculine physical traits. Some changes are permanent, while others are reversible.

Estrogen: Hormone used to create more feminine physical traits. Some changes are permanent, while others are reversible.

Anti-Androgens: Medications that block testosterone, often used alongside estrogen. Effects are reversible.

Medical Gender Affirmation: May involve puberty blockers, hormones, and/or surgery.

Legal Gender Affirmation: Involves changing one's name and gender marker on legal documents.

New Name Alert! Supporting Social Transition

Your child may want a brand new name to match their identity, so be prepared if they ask to be called by a different name (and pronouns) as part of their social transition. It's also important to

use their chosen name and pronouns consistently to show your support. This may take some adjustment, but it is a crucial way to affirm their identity.

By understanding these terms and concepts, you can better support your child and promote a more inclusive and affirming environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and accepted!



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