



HOW TO  
SUPPORT YOUR  
*transgender*  
TEENAGER

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF TEENS  
COMING OUT AND NAVIGATING LIFE

VERED COUNSELING

VERED  
COUNSELING

# UNDERSTANDING *gender*

How do you know if you're a man or a woman?

When I've asked parents this question, they usually tell me:

- I have the "parts" that men or women have
- I like stereotypical masculine or feminine things, such as playing sports or wearing makeup
- I like wearing masculine or feminine clothes, such as slacks or dresses
- I've never questioned when other people tell me I'm a man/woman or think of me as such
- "It just fits"

What about men who have had testicular cancer or women who don't like to wear makeup? Are they still their identified gender?

When we go through these items one-by-one, we find that the only thing that consistently indicates gender is a deep sense of who you are.

**WHILE MANY THINGS CAN SIGNAL OR BE ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER,  
ALL THAT'S REQUIRED IS A DEEP SENSE THAT**

*this is who you are*

# HOW CAN I *support them?*

When teens come out, it's often overwhelming and scary.

There are a few things you can do to help them on their journey:

- **Believe them**

When a teen comes out as another gender (whether that's "trans girl, non-binary, genderfluid," or a number of other identities), the most important thing you can do is believe them.

It can be difficult to support what we might not initially understand, but the least we can do is believe that our kids know how they feel.

- **Get them support**

Getting involved with organizations that understand and support transgender people can make a huge difference in helping your child feel connected to a larger community.

Teens can also find a lot of support from talking with a counselor who specializes in trans issues. Finding someone who is informed and can help guide the family through future hurdles can help provide stability through turbulent teenage years.

**WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU WHAT THEY'RE GOING THROUGH,**

*believe them*

# WHAT CHANGES CAN PARENTS *expect?*

Finding out that your child is transgender can cause a lot of changes within a family system. Some things to expect include:

- **Your own grief process**

It's very common for parents to go through a grieving process for the children they thought they knew.

In order to embrace our teen as they are, parents often need to let go of the child we thought they were.

It's completely normal to grieve. Finding people who you can talk to, whether it's a trusted friend or counselor, can help you move through this process.

- **Social and family fallout**

When we share that our child is trans, sometimes the reactions of friends and family can surprise us. People who we thought were supportive turn out to make critical statements, while people we never expected show unwavering support.

Many parents reassess their social circle for the better.

- **Education and a new normal**

There's definitely a learning curve involved in raising a trans teen, but, in time, many parents are able to understand how their child feels and embrace their teenager as they are.

**CHANGE MAY BE HARD, BUT THE PAIN DOESN'T**

*last forever*

# RESOURCES AND

# support

You don't have to go through this journey alone. Here are a few resources that can help you understand your child better and get connected with other parents going through the same thing.

- **Books/online resources**

*My New Gender Workbook* by Kate Bornstein

*The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live Outside Gender Boxes* by Diane Ehrensaft

*The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens* by Stephanie A. Brill and Lisa Kenney

TransYouth Family Allies - <http://www.imatyfa.org/>

Offers a number of resources on understanding and advocating for your trans child

- **Support groups**

Gender Spectrum - <https://www.genderspectrum.org>

Provides information and online support for trans kids and their parents

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) - <https://pflag.org/>

Offers support for LGBTQ+ people and their families

- **Professional support**

Trans in the South by the Campaign for Southern Equality

<https://southernequality.org/resources/transinthesouth/>

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)

<https://www.wpath.org/>

Vered Counseling

<https://www.veredcounseling.com/>

LET'S DO THIS

together