

# Support Guide

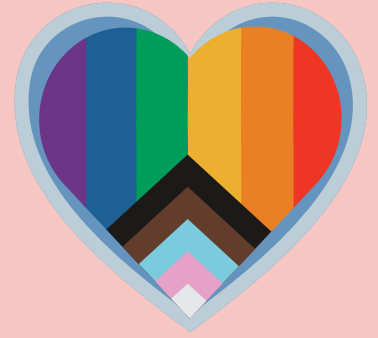
## For Parents and Caregivers of LGBTQ+ Youth

Are you an adult wanting to support a young person in your life who is or could be LGBTQ+ identified?

If so, read on!  
This guide is for you.



# First Things First:



Thank you for choosing to  
be(come) a safe(r) person  
for the LGBTQ+ young  
person in your life!



This guide has A LOT of things in it... remember to pace yourself.

- 1) **This process is not about becoming an LGBTQ+ expert;** it's about becoming a more empathetic and knowledgeable trusted adult for your LGBTQ+ young person.
- 2) **Only do what makes sense for where you are and who you're looking to support, right now.** Circle back to other pieces as needed.
- 3) Your child is on a journey to become their full selves. **You are navigating your own journey** in learning how to show up positively for these new (to you) parts of them. **You both deserve grace.**
- 4) **Don't let your fear of not knowing the 'right thing' to say or do stop you from trying.**
- 5) **You will make mistakes along the way.** Failing means you tried! What matters is that you make amends, learn more, and do better next time.
- 6) When it comes to this support guide, just like in life, please:

take your time,

take breaks,

and remember to breathe.

**You've got this!**

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# Welcome

In this parent and caregiver support guide, you will find:

- journaling prompts,
- insightful exercises,
- helpful videos,
- discussion starters,
- local and national resources,
- more!

Find a cozy spot, and grab your favorite pen.  
This guide is intended to be interactive!

Any goal of changing how your child identifies or sees themselves can have a serious impact on their happiness, health, and overall wellbeing.

Numerous studies show that supportive family relationships are an important protective factor for LGBTQ+ young people. To learn more about the impacts of losing family support, check out the statement and QR code on the right.

We hope this guide can help parent/caregiver and child relationships flourish and grow.

\*Note: we all pass through multiple phases in our lives within which we try on different ways of being. Queerness can be one, too. For however long and in whatever way the young person in your life sees a queer identity as part of who they are, please do your best to show-up with support and understanding.

Family Acceptance Project (FAP)'s research found that family behaviors that support their child help promote self-esteem, overall health, and stronger relationships, and help to protect against suicidal behavior, depression and substance abuse. This includes behaviors such as standing up for their child when others mistreat them because of their LGBTQ identity and requiring that other family members treat their child with respect – even when they believe that being gay or transgender is wrong."

Excerpts from the **Family Acceptance Project** (FAP) website, reviewing their research on family acceptance and rejection.

To read more, click [here](#) or scan the QR code with the camera app on your smartphone.



This guide is for you to share some deep and maybe even difficult truths. Some of the things you share may not be ideal for others in your home to read. **Please be mindful about where you store this guide.**



# Grounding

Before we begin, take a moment to check in with yourself.

Why are you beginning this work now?

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What are you feeling excited about? What are you feeling nervous about?

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Excitement and nervousness often feel similar in our bodies. Sometimes the things we feel nervous about can become exciting opportunities to explore.

What are your goals for interacting with this guide?

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**Knowledge  
is Key**

# Questions

Let's start by tackling a few questions you might have about the LGBTQ+ community, or your child's LGBTQ+ identity(ies).



**When your child came out to you, what identities or terms did they share with you?** (Pro-tip: reflecting back the language someone uses for themselves is really important. Try using their words as much as possible. One student shared, "it helps [your child] know you are listening, and trying.")

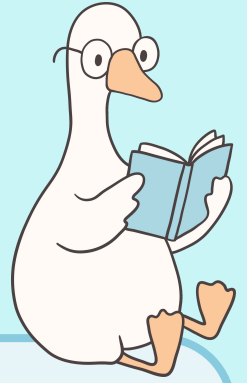
"I'm a lesbian. I've liked girls for a long time. I wanted to tell you because I met someone, and I think I'm in love..."

"I'm trans. I am still figuring out what that means for me, but I wanted to tell you because I think I want to try using a new name..."

**How well do you understand the terms you wrote about above?** Write down anything here that you'd like to learn more about.

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for writing answers to the question above.

# LGBTQ+ Terms



**Pro Tip:** Focus on the terms that apply to your child to help things feel less overwhelming.

Are there any terms your child is using you DON'T understand?

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Take a moment to briefly scan the next few pages to learn more about the terms you don't understand yet.

How are these definitions similar or different from your understanding or what you've heard from your child?

Same

Different

Same	Different
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**Remember:** There's no one "right" way to define or live these labels. People use different words for the same thing!

# LGBTQ+ Terms

Here are some definitions to help you along your learning journey. **Please remember that language is constantly evolving, and not everyone uses these terms in the same ways.** We recommend looking up [PFLAG's LGBTQ+ Glossary](#) for a more comprehensive list. While these terms may be commonly used or defined this way in the U.S., it's important to remember that a U.S. perspective does not equate to a universal perspective.

## Introduction

### Common Acronyms

**LGBTQ+** | An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community. Other common variations include LGB, LGBT, LGBTQQ+, 2SLGBTQQ+, 2SLGBTQQIA+. The second Q = questioning; 2S = two-spirit; I = intersex; A = asexual.

**SOGIE** | This is an acronym which stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression. *Everyone* has a SOGIE that is lived and expressed in a way that is unique to them.

**TGNCC** | This acronym stands for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming. It is an umbrella term that is often used to speak about anyone who is not cisgender. This includes transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, agender, and other gender creative people.

### Parts of Identity

*It's normal for one's understanding of themselves in any of these areas to change across their lifetime.*

**Gender Expression** | External showing of one's gender identity. This can be expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics, hair cut, or even how someone talks. These may or may not conform to traditional Western definitions of masculine or feminine.

**Gender Identity** | One's innermost concept of themselves as a woman, man, a blend of both, or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. We cannot know someone's gender identity by looking at them.

*Pro tip: when you want to know someone's pronouns, share your pronouns first!*

**Gender Marker** | Gender markers are used to indicate someone's gender identity. For example a form or identification card might ask you to select M for male, F for female, I for intersex, or X for something else.

**Sexual Orientation** | An inherent, changing or fixed, emotional, romantic, physical, or sexual attraction to other people.

**Sex** | Sex is a broad classification based upon someone's physiological anatomy. The most common criteria used to determine this is someone's reproductive system (internal and external reproductive organs), however there are actually multiple components which contribute to someone's sex. Each of these can develop differently. Depending on how they show up someone is will be assigned one of three labels: female, male, or intersex. *Intersex* is an umbrella term for people born with natural variations in sex characteristics – such as chromosomes (e.g., XY, XX, XXY), genitals, reproductive organs, or hormones – that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. There are over 40 recognized types of intersex.

**Sex Assigned at Birth** | The sex – male, female, or intersex – that a health provider uses to describe a child at birth based on their external genital anatomy. This is often represented with the acronyms AMAB (assigned male at birth), AFAB (assigned female at birth), SAAB (sex assigned at birth) or GAAB (gender assigned at birth).

# LGBTQ+ Terms

## Identities

*Parts of Identity are Independent!*

Someone can be **Assigned Female at Birth**; Have a **Male Gender Identity**, a **Gender Non-Conforming Gender Expression** and have a **Heterosexual Sexual Orientation** (only attracted to women).

or

Someone can be **Assigned Male at Birth**; Have a **Male Gender Identity**, a **Masculine Gender Expression** and have a **Homosexual Sexual Orientation** (only attracted to men).

## Sexual Orientation

**Lesbian** | A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

**Gay** | A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves, however it is most commonly used to describe men who are attracted to other men.

**Bisexual** | A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to people of the same and other gender identity than their own. This could be only one or more additional sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Some people use this term interchangeably with pansexual, though some do not.

**Pansexual** | Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily at the same time, in the same way or to the same amount. Some people use this term interchangeably with bisexual, though some do not.

**Queer** | A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many within the LGBTQ+ community.

**Asexual** | Often called "ACE" or ace spec for short. Asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little, or conditional sexual attraction. Some asexual people can and do experience romantic attraction, which is different from sexual attraction.

**Aromantic** | Often called "aro" for short, aromantic is a spectrum of identities, and refers to people who do not or rarely experience romantic attraction towards others. Some aromantic people can still experience sexual attraction, but not all do.

**Same-gender loving** | A term some prefer do not like using terms like lesbian, gay or bisexual to express their attraction to or love for people of the same gender. They sometimes use acronyms like: T4T (transgender for transgender), WLW (women loving women) and MLM (men loving men) to express this type of attraction.

# LGBTQ+ Terms

## Sex & Gender Identity

**Intersex** | Intersex people are born with a range of naturally occurring differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy outside of those typically labeled as 'female' or 'male'. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits. There are over 40 recognized types of intersex.

**Agender** | someone who does not identify as having a gender. Sometimes agender people identify as having a non-gendered or neutral sense of self at times using terms such as "genderfree" or "genderless" to describe themselves.

**Cisgender** | A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Transgender (adj.)** | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. It is an adjective (e.g. transgender man) it should no be used as a noun (e.g. a transgender).

**Non-binary** | An adjective describing a person who does not identify within the gender binary. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as something else completely outside of these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

**Gender Non-Conforming** | A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to traditional Western expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

**Gender-Expansive** | A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

**Gender-Fluid** | A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

**Genderqueer** | Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as something else completely outside of these categories.

**Two-Spirit** | A term used to describe Native or Indigenous people who hold a dynamic blend of masculine and feminine energies. This term can be used to describe gender and/or sexual/romantic orientation, as well as a spirit of connection to one's land, history, peoples, and culture. A specific definition of this term will vary from nation to nation and person to person. It is often expressed as 2S.

# LGBTQ+ Terms

## Go Deeper

**Ally** | A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

**Coming Out** | The process in which a person shares their sexual orientation or gender identity with others, or with themselves. Coming out is not a one time thing. Every time someone shares or recognizes a different part of their identity; or shares their truth with a new audience is a 'coming out'.

**Questioning** | Figuring out who we are is a normal and healthy part of being alive. When unsure if an aspect of queer identity fits, someone might refer to themselves as questioning. This is a very common part of the coming out process (ex. I'm not sure if I'm gay or not, I guess I'm questioning).

**To Out / Outing** | Exposing someone's gender or sexual/romantic orientation identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, or other key relationships.

**Pronouns** | A word that can replace a noun that refers either to the participants being discussed (e.g., I, you ) or to someone or something mentioned elsewhere in the discussion (e.g., she, it, this ). Sharing your own pronouns or asking for someone else's is a great way to acknowledge that you cannot know someone's gender identity based upon their gender expression.

*Pro tip: when you want to know someone's pronouns, share your pronouns first!*

**Neopronouns or xenopronouns** | Are 'new' or non-traditional pronouns, the use of which goes back to the invention of "thon" in 1934. Neopronouns are often used to reflect gender expansiveness not represented by gender-specific traditional pronouns such as "he" or "she." Some use them to avoid the ways in which 'they' are used to other marginalized communities (ex. look at those people, what would you expect of them?). Examples of neopronouns include "ze/hir/hirs", "[fae/fem/faers](#)", "e/em/eirs".

**Homophobia** | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with and dismissal, and violence against people who are attracted to members of the same sex. This can exist at the interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels, and can be conscious or unconscious.

**Transphobia** | Transphobia refers to the hatred, bias, dismissal, and violence against transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse people. It describes any feeling or behavior that stigmatizes trans people, sees trans people as less than human, or denies the identities and experiences of trans people.

[Click here \(or scan the QR code\) for a fantastic resource on neopronouns](#)



# LGBTQ+ Terms

## Go Deeper

**Transition** | A series of processes that some TGNC people undergo in order to feel more truly themselves in the world and in their bodies. There are many types of transition the main ones are:

- social transition: changing ones clothing, hair or informal name or pronoun change.
- medical transition: hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries.
- legal transition: legal name or gender marker change on government documents.

TGNC people may choose some, all, or none of these processes. Lack of any type of transition does not make someone less 'truly' TGNC. Medical or other types of transition are not universally accessible for reasons ranging from personal safety to cost to age. TGNC children under the age of 16 almost exclusively only under go social transition.

**Gender Dysphoria** | A medical term defined as someone having clinically significant distress caused by a persistent and significant difference between someone's internal gender identity and their external physical body, how they are presenting socially, or if their mind and emotions are not aligning with their gender identity. This can be exasperated when someone is misgendered or otherwise treated in a way that does not match their gender identity. *Gender Dysphoria* is not universally experienced by TGNC people however is often needed to be diagnosed in order for TGNC people to be able to access gender affirming care.

**Gender Euphoria** | The positive feeling someone experiences when their internal sense of themselves matches how their body looks, they are perceived socially, or their emotions and mind match their gender identity. The affirmation and at times safety a TGNC person experiences when they are treated in a way that shows others see them as they see themselves.

**Misgender** | To refer to someone incorrectly for their gender identity intentionally or unintentionally (e.g. the wrong pronouns or honorifics (Ms. or Mx.).

**Puberty blockers** | Medication that delays the onset of puberty and the physical changes that come with it. These blockers can help reduce the need for gender affirming procedures later in life as well as lessen the experience of gender dysphoria in the moment and in the future.

**Deadname** | To refer to someone using a name they no longer use whether intentionally or unintentionally. It does not matter if it is still their legal name, it is harmful and dismissive of their identity to do so.

**Gender Binary** | A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. That someone's gender identity must align with their sex assigned at birth, gender expression, and the gender roles they are expected to fill.

**Mx.** | Pronounced mix, is the answer to the question: "What should I say instead of "Mr." or "Ms.?" It is gender inclusive and often is the preferred honorific for TGNC people.

[Click here \(or scan the QR code\) for a great short video about deadnaming](#)

Source: Human Rights Campaign, with adaptations from SFUSD



# Edutainment

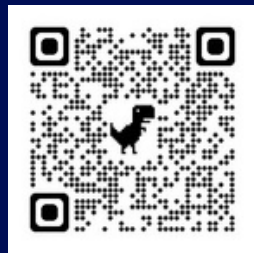
The internet is unfortunately littered with biased, outdated, and sometimes even hateful information, so taking the time to find reputable resources for your learning journey is critical. Please check out some short videos below that we like from the youth-oriented sex education YouTube channel, [www.Amaze.org](http://www.Amaze.org), that might answer some of your initial questions.

*Reminder:  
You don't have to watch all the videos all at once. Start with the one that most applies to your situation.*

[Love is Love: Free to be Me](#)



[Sexual Orientation: A Spectrum of Attraction](#)



[The Range of Gender Identities](#)



[This is who I am](#)



[I AM ME: Understanding the Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Identity](#)



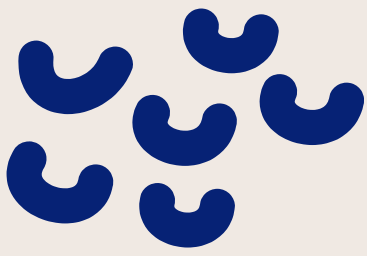
[Gender Roles and Stereotypes](#)



[What LGBTQ+ People Wish Their Parents Knew \(great for all caregivers!\)](#)



To access these videos, please click on the links or scan the QR codes above with the camera app on your smartphone.



# Space to Reflect



Where can I learn more about...

After watching these videos and reading through some terminology, do you have any additional questions that came up for you?

If so, write them down here.

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Now that you've identified the questions you have, keep this list handy!

This guide is full of resources which can help answer some of them. And there's TONS of more linked in back of this guide.



# Worry Dumping



# Worry Dumping


"Worry dumping" is when you dump all of your fears about someone or something and worries onto someone. Many well-meaning caregivers worry dump on their young person when they come out as LGBTQ+. Often, this is because parents feel overwhelmed and concerned that their child might face challenges due to their LGBTQ+ identity. It is understandable for a parent or caregiver to worry about their child. However, it's best to avoid sharing these concerns with your young person, or to at least be intentional about which worries you share.

The issue with worry dumping is that you're often communicating more than just your concern. Worry dumping often adds to the anxiety the young person may already be feeling. After all, the pressure to share this piece of who you are (and not be certain how you'll be received) can be a lot. It's very easy to interpret worry as a form of disapproval- particularly if the worries get repeated over and over again.

Some parents may for example have a stereotype in mind of who an LGBTQ+ person is. When they share their worry, their child might hear that they believe a harmful stereotype more than they support their child.

Do your best to show up in a supportive or at least neutral way, first. Remember, there's lots to celebrate about LGBTQ+ identities and the fact that your child has shared their with you is big, positive, deal! There will be plenty of time to navigate concerns later.

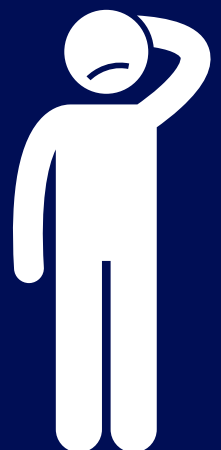
For this next exercise, take some time to jot down your worries into the Worries Dump Truck. You might be surprised by what it can haul away.



"I am just worried your life is going to be harder..."

"I just don't want you to be teased at school..."

"I'm worried the rest of the family won't understand this..."



# Worry Dumping

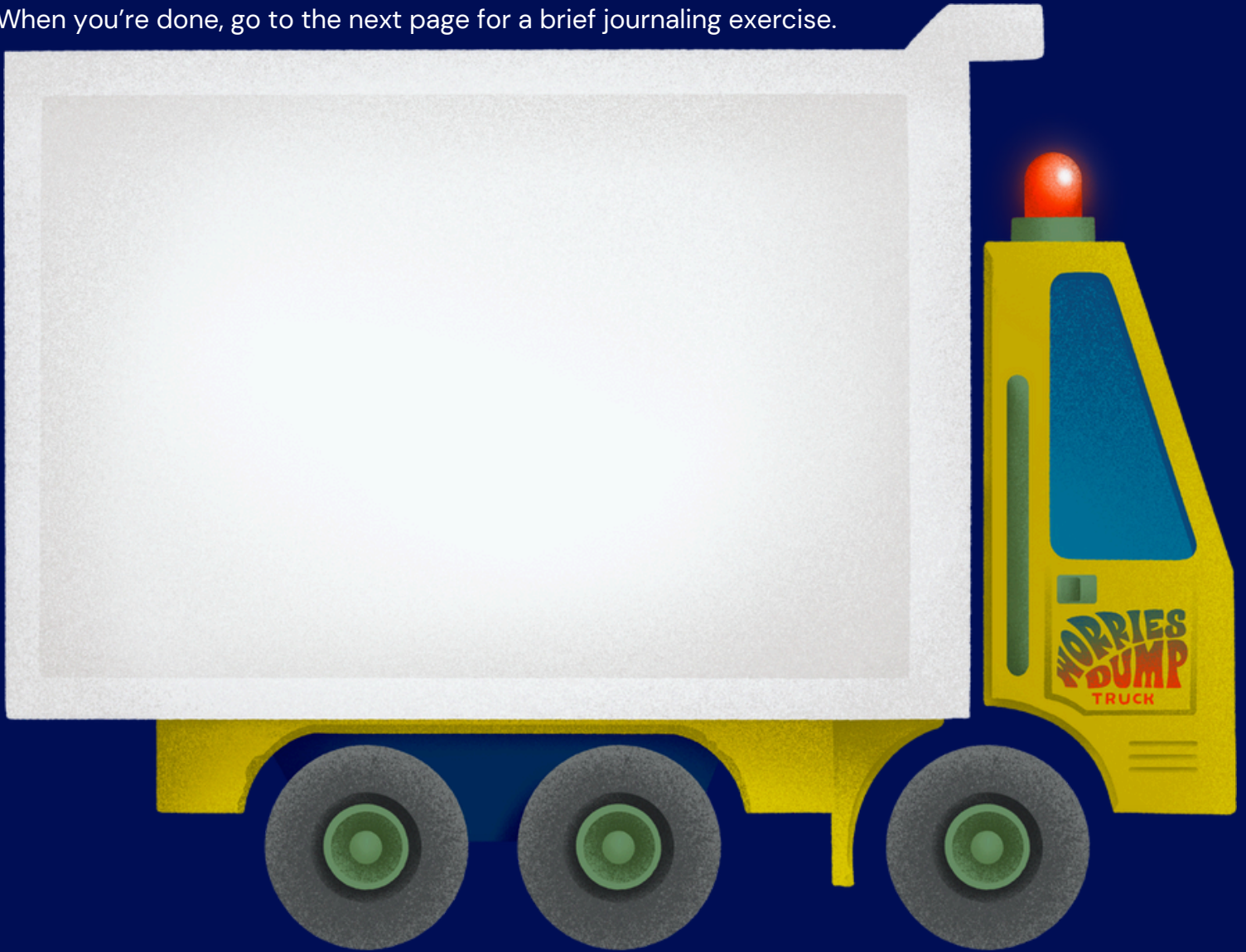


## Instructions

Write down all of the worries that come up for you on the Worries Dump Truck below. These could be about your young person living in the world as an out and proud LGBTQ+ person, what experiences you are worried you or they will not have, or anything else.

This packet is for your eyes only, so take your time, and be honest with yourself. **Please be mindful about where and how you store this guide.** (While sometimes it's good to share worries with your child to show you care, the space below is an opportunity for you to be honest with yourself, and some of the worries you jot down may not be ideal to share with your child.)

When you're done, go to the next page for a brief journaling exercise.



It's okay to acknowledge the stress that may come with your child living a different life than what you have imagined for them. It's how you process and respond to that stress that matters most. Check out this Tik Tok to enjoy a relaxing mindfulness exercise for a quick moment of R&R.



# Reflecting on Your Concerns



## Instructions

Now that you've spent some time writing out some of your worries and concerns, it's time to reflect on some strategies for being proactive. Some of these worries might feel less important for you after simply naming them, but others might still be at the front of your mind. Please spend some time looking at the concerns you put in the Worries Dump Truck, and circle the most pressing issue that gives you the most stress. Then, spend some time answering the reflection questions that follow to begin processing your concern.

### Holding the Concern

Summarize your concern:

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Do you have any values or beliefs that are showing up in this concern? If so, what are they?

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Is there a story behind this concern? Does it relate to your backstory or childhood experiences involving gender?

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What outcomes are you hoping for? Is there any support you'll need?

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Is there a person or resource you know of who could help you process or learn more about this concern? Write their name(s) here.

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Is there any part of this worry that might hurt your child if you were to communicate it?

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You probably dumped more than one worry into the Worries Dump Truck, and that's okay! If you would like to process other worries, you can always repeat the exercise above on another piece of paper. In the next section, you will do some brainstorming to determine who is part of your support system. As you think about your support system, ask yourself who you might be able to discuss your concerns with, or where you can go to learn more.

# Tapping into Systems of Support

Now that you've identified some areas of stress, it's time to map out some supports you have available to you. There may be times when you need to vent or process what's going on for you as a parent, and it's important to have a solid support system in place. It is best to choose this support system for yourself with great care. For example, you'll want this support system to be comprised of people who actively support the LGBTQ+ community. Preferably, your support system would also be people who your child is already 'out' to, to maximize their privacy.

## Who is your support system?

Identify 3 solid pillars of support in your life. Write their names below.



If you are struggling to think of people who would make an ideal support team, consider checking out some of the organizations listed at the end of this support guide or searching, "support for parents of LGBTQ+ youth in [your state]."

Doing this research ahead of time ensures you have a support system in place if and when you need it.



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# Identity Formation





# Gender Identity Development

When caregivers show acceptance for the different ways someone can express themselves it can help decrease anxiety for children whatever their age or gender identity.

## READ

As teens get older, medical interventions may become appropriate. If this is a question that you or your teen is wondering about, reach out to your medical provider or a gender specialist to learn more.

The physical, social, and emotional changes of puberty make this a common time for youth to realize that their gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.

You may notice your pre-teen making efforts to “play-up” or “down-play” some of their body’s physical changes as they enter puberty. This is often the time puberty blockers begin to be considered.

It is common for children to start to explore their gender identity by dressing and acting in different ways. Children whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth may experience increased social anxiety because they recognize that they are different from their peers in this way.

Years 16+

Years 13-15

Years 9-12

Years 6-8

## REFLECT

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To read more, click [here](#) or scan the QR code with the camera app on your smartphone.



# Thinking About Identity Formation

Identity formation refers to the way we come to understand who we are and the various pieces of our identities that make up how we see and know ourselves. In the questions that follow, you will spend some time thinking about your own identities, specifically your gender and sexual and/or romantic identity, to think deeper about the social messages you have received around these identities.

1. Where and how did you first learn about your gender identity? Try to identify at least 5 different ways (such as from people, society, family, or media, to name a few) you learned about your gender.

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2. What is your earliest memory of you being aware of your gender? How did that feel in the moment? How does that memory feel to you now?

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## Quick Glossary Refresher

**Gender Identity** | One's innermost concept of themselves as a woman, man, a blend of both, or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from sex assigned at birth. We cannot know someone's gender identity by looking at them. Asking and sharing pronouns is a helpful way to respect someone's gender identity.

Racial Identity

Ability or Disability Identity

Ethnic Identity

Socioeconomic Identity

Gender Identity

National Identity

Religious Identity

Political Identity

Citizenship Status Identity

Sexual and/or Romantic Orientation Identity

**Examples  
of  
Identities**

# Thinking About Identity Formation

3. What is your earliest memory of you being aware of your attraction towards others? How did that feel in the moment? How does that memory feel to you now?

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4. Do you remember experiencing any situations that reinforced what was expected of your gender? What were the expectations being communicated?

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5. Thinking about the last question, how do those experiences feel for you now? Are there any advantages to these gender expectations? Are there any disadvantages?

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6. How do you think your child has been impacted by assumptions and expectations of their gender and/or sexuality? (**Not sure?** Ask them!)

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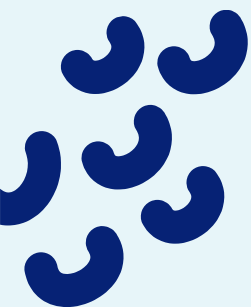
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**Intersectionality:  
We're All More  
Than One Thing**



# Notes on Race and Ethnicity



It may seem odd to pause and reflect on how race intersects with this conversation, as many parents share the same racial and ethnic identities as their children (though not all). However, there is much to be said about the intersections of race, family acceptance, family communities such as religious spaces, and LGBTQ+ youth. Please read on for some perspectives on this subject direct from students.

"Queerness does not equal whiteness- many people of color are also part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community too! And not just guys- anyone could be queer."

"Queer people of color face even harder challenges than white queer people because they also have to deal with racism."

"Not all LGBTQ spaces are safe spaces for all- there is lots of racism that happens in the LGBTQ community. Spaces specifically just for LGBTQ youth of color are important too."

"Some of us, such as Native youth, feel removed from our home cultures. I wish I could come into my LGBTQ identity feeling more connected to my home culture, too."

"Everyday I code switch around my family and at school. I feel like I have to put different pieces of who I am on a shelf, depending on who I'm around, and what parts of me will be accepted there."

"I really appreciate having a therapist who is both a lesbian and a person of color. I am really happy my mom found her. It is so helpful that we have a lot in common."

**Intersectionality** is defined as the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

## More questions for all parents to consider:

Does my child know that every part of them is welcome at home?

Does my child have community to grow up with who respects their LGBTQ+ identity, and also has other identities in common with them?

Does my child know they can come to me if they have questions about racism, or racial justice?

# Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth with Disabilities



Youth with disabilities have a gender identity and a romantic and/or sexual orientation, just like non-disabled and neurotypical youth! Read on to learn more about some strategies for supporting young people with disabilities who are or might be LGBTQ+ identified.

Don't assume young people with disabilities won't experience attraction! Some folks may identify on the asexual spectrum, but this is certainly not the case for everyone.

Providing access to medically accurate and shame-free information about sexual health for young people with disabilities is critical.

Recognize that many young people with disabilities also identify as LGBTQ+ . Try not to assume who they want to go to the dance with, who they may have a crush on, what kind of style they like in terms of clothing, or other actions that assume their identity.

Connecting with others is a universal human need! This means that all people, including neurodiverse people, have the human right to explore who they are, and seek out connection and relationships, including romantic and sexual relationships.

Let your child know you are open to discussing any questions they have about sexual behavior and health at any age--they are never too young to have questions that deserve answers.

Communicating in "black and white" terms can make ideas more accessible, but try to be mindful about what gets framed this way. For example, instead of explaining gender in rigid terms, you can communicate a rigid commitment to loving them no matter who they grow up to be.

Talking about safety is really important for all young people, but it's only one aspect of a larger discussion about dating and relationships. Try not to overemphasize danger and risk when talking to your young person about dating.



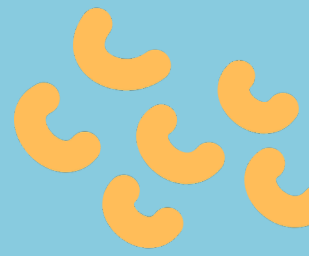
[Centre for Sexuality](#)



[The Friendship and Dating Program](#)

For more resources that support disabled youth and identity formation, please scan the QR codes with the camera app on your smartphone.

# LGBTQ+ Youth & Foster Care



Studies have found that about 30% of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ+ and 5% as transgender, in comparison to 11% and 1% of youth not in foster care.

Some LGBTQ+ youth, are rejected, neglected or abused by their families of origin when their families learn that they identify as LGBTQ.

If you learn that your child is LGBTQ+ from a source other than the child, avoid confronting them. Instead model strength, courage, and respect so that your child will feel more comfortable confiding in you. Do your best to embrace your child, their identity and their decision to be open or not with you.

Youth who are rejected by their families are often vulnerable to greater risks than other youth in care. Studies show that risks include lower self-esteem a much greater chance of physical health and mental health problems as adults. Sex traffickers frequently target individuals who lack strong support networks putting rejected LGBTQ+ youth at particular risk.

LGBTQ+ foster youth have the right to be treated equally, to express their gender identity, and to be open about their sexual orientation. Make sure they have access to the same privileges and responsibilities as their cis/straight counterparts (e.g. dating, curfews, chores).

LGBTQ+ children have legal rights in care. Including the right to be free from verbal, emotional and physical harassment in their placement, school and community. Ensure that your LGBTQ+ young person is aware of their rights, and are connected to LGBTQ+ supportive spaces and resources.

LGBTQ+ foster youth are not required to go along with any efforts, whether direct or indirect, to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Leading mental health and child welfare experts have concluded that so-called reparative or conversion therapies are ineffective, potentially dangerous, and unethical.

Report mistreatment to their attorney or Guardian ad Litem. A foster youth's conversations with their attorney are confidential, and they do not need to come out to receive protection or legal advocacy.



[Getting Down to Basics: Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care](#)



[California LGBTQ+ Foster Youth Rights](#)



[Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents](#)

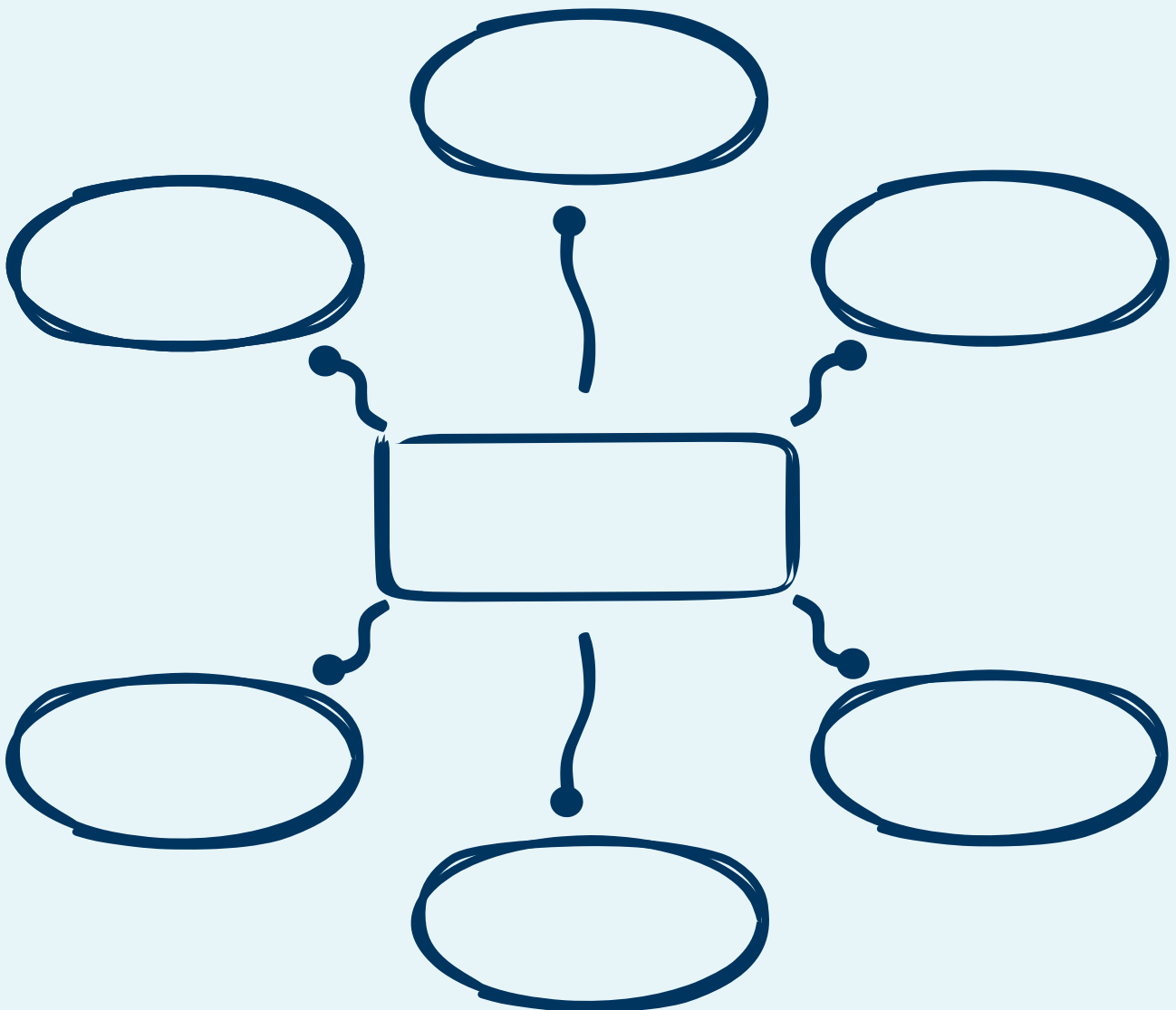
For more resources that support LGBTQ+ foster youth, please scan the QR codes with the camera app on your smartphone.

# How Identities Interact

Using this map, take a moment to reflect on your child's unique identity. What are different important parts of who they are? How do these pieces of themselves interact with their LGBTQ+ identity?

Write your child's name in the center, and then write down an important part of what makes them them in each of the circles – Maybe their **age** is really important to them because they are the oldest child in your family. Maybe they love to **paint** and have found important friends in their art class who nurture their creativity.

What are some of my child's identities?



Your child is a beautifully complex person, like everyone else! Just because you are now aware of, or are focusing on, their LGBTQ+ identity doesn't mean it's the main part of who they are. Let your child lead how and when you focus on their queer identity. Sometimes the most important identity to them might just be 'kid'.



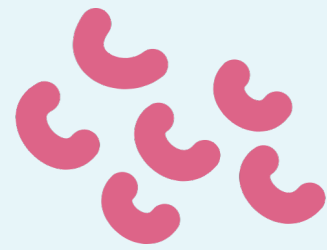
[Click here \(or scan the QR code\) for a great short video about just such a moment.](#)





# Talking About It

# Conversation Starters



Sometimes it's hard to know how to start a conversation about gender or sexuality, or know what to ask. It's okay to be scared to say the wrong thing. You will probably make mistakes as you learn.

Your child will appreciate any way you find to communicate that you see them, love them, and are there for them no matter what.

Check out this article, "Things LGBTQ+ People Wish Their Parents Knew" as a place to start. Please scan the QR code for access.



Here's a list of conversation starters you can try during your next check-in.

"I really appreciate you sharing about your (gender and/or sexuality) with me. Is there anything else you've been wanting to share? I'm listening."

"I have a few questions about some things you mentioned the other day. Do you have a website or resource you recommend where I could do some more learning on my own?"

"I don't mean to pry, but I'm curious to know how things are going with your coming out process, if you're comfortable sharing. Has everyone been supportive?"

"Discovering a new layer of yourself and then sharing it with family and friends can be exciting, and also sometimes a bit stressful. Do you want to do anything special to celebrate, or blow off some steam?"

# Do's and Don't's

A brief list of some things to consider trying or doing more, and some things to avoid.

## Do

- Listen** without judgment or interruption, and remember that they are the expert on their identity (even if they don't have all the answers).
- Always use the correct name and pronouns** for your child, and apologize if mistakes happen. With consistent practice, it will become second nature in no time. Also, remember that it's okay for them to try out a new name and pronouns- it doesn't have to be permanent.
- Be patient.** They may need space after they share this information with you.
- Remember to check in** with your child before sharing information about their LGBTQ+ identity with other friends and family.
- Find groups, counselors, etc.** to ask your general questions about this aspect of their identity, as you are learning too.
- Remember to express** how much you love all of them.
- Thank them** for trusting you with their truth.
- Ask them** how you can support them.
- Help others** learn how to respect your child's identity

## Don't

- Assert that this is a phase** that will pass, suggest that their identity isn't "real," or hold any goals of changing your child's gender or sexuality.
- Catastrophize**, or assume your child will have a harder life because they are LGBTQ+.
- Tell them they are too young** to know who they are.
- Ask your child to educate you** about everything you'd like to know about LGBTQ+ people.
- Say, "I love you even though..."** or "I love you despite..."
- Shame** your child, or try to guilt them into becoming someone they are not.
- Ignore** or pretend you didn't hear the information they have shared with you.
- Force** your child to express their gender in any particular way.
- Reject or shame** your child, or treat them any differently because of their identity.
- Look the other way if** others tease or belittle your child, or their LGBTQ+ identity.

# Some Strategies for Repair

Sometimes, the stress of having big and important conversations with the people we love the most in life can be overwhelming and difficult. If you are concerned that some conversations you've already had about gender and/or sexuality may have caused some strain between you and your child, please read on to learn more about some strategies for repair.

## Reopening the Dialogue

### Be Willing to Hear About the Impact

Make space to hear what happened from their perspective, try not to fixate on your intentions, and don't rush to the "fix it" stage.

It can be hard to consider reopening a conversation that might not have gone very well, but by circling back, you can begin to address what happened. This gives you an opportunity to show your child that at the end of the day, the most important thing to you is that your bond stays strong. Here are two tips inspired by "Fumbling Towards Repair".

### Make a Plan for the Future

Ask your child if what you have in mind addresses the rupture, and can help avoid it from reoccurring.

## Five Strategies for Listening Well

### Check for Understanding

Repeat back what your child said, and make sure it aligns with what they are trying to tell you.

### Focus

On what the person is saying, not planning what to say next. Turn off the TV, and silence your cell phone and other distractions.

### Be Aware of Body Language

Your eye contact, facial expressions, and other elements of body language are also communicating – make sure you are sending the message that you are open.

### Show Your Care

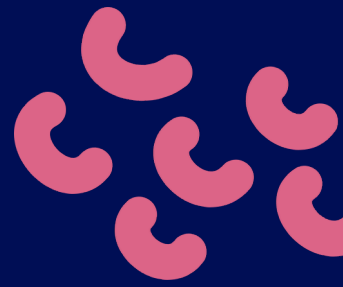
Show your interest and care by trying to fully understand their feelings and concerns. Make your love for them the priority of the conversation.

### Withhold Criticism

Put your thoughts to the side about what you think is wrong or right, or what you think they should do.

These exercises were inspired by ideas shared in "Fumbling Towards Repair" by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan.

# Some Strategies for Repair



Remember that healthy conflict is good for relationships. Sometimes people need to change how they relate to one another, and healthy conflict can help us begin that process. Conflict is also very natural – what matters most is how we navigate it.

## Strategies for Resolving a Past Conflict

- Take time to really consider your child's perspective, and acknowledge their feelings.
- Avoid yelling, shaming, or any behavior that could add stress to a conversation, and lead your child to feeling unsafe.
- Consider a mindfulness exercise such as meditation before beginning a potentially challenging conversation, and take a deep breath before speaking.
- Don't be afraid to apologize if harm was caused- it's important that young people have healthy apologies and repair modeled for them.
- Lead with love all the way, and make your love for them the priority. Tell them you love them, and center love in your responses.

## Journaling Prompt

"What are some difficult conversations I have successfully navigated with my child in the past? What made the conversation go well? Can I utilize any of those strategies now?"

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# A Letter to My Child

Use this space to write an affirming letter to your child where you can practice using their affirmed name/pronouns, and pledge how you will support them and show them love moving forward.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Handwriting practice area consisting of 20 sets of horizontal dashed lines for writing.

With Love Always,

\_\_\_\_\_



# Resources





# Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth



## National and Local Resources near San Francisco, CA

### SF Suicide Prevention

Confidential hotlines. "We are here for you 24/7, 365 days a year!"

[sfsuicide.org](https://sfsuicide.org)

Call 415-781-0500

Text 'YOUTH' to 415-200-2920

### The Trevor Project

"The leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention nonprofit organization for LGBTQ+ young people."

Call 1-866-488-7386

Text 'START' to 678-678

### Trans Lifeline

"A grassroots hotline and microgrants non-profit offering direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis – for the trans community, by the trans community."

Call 1-877-565-8860

### Sí a la Vida

"Seeks to reduce the number of new cases of HIV in the San Francisco Latino community." Community engagement activities, peer counseling, and support services available for LGBTQ youth ages 14-19.

[ifrsf.org/siala vida](https://ifrsf.org/siala vida)

### FEDUP

"A collective of trans+, intersex, and gender diverse people who believe eating disorders in marginalized communities are social justice issues."

[fedupcollective.org](https://fedupcollective.org)

### Casa de las Madres

"Serves anyone affected by domestic violence with teen specific".

<https://www.lacasa.org>

24/7 365 Call 18779230700 or

Text 415 200 3575

### LYRIC

An SF local organization offering "education enhancement, career trainings, health promotion, and leadership development" for LGBTQ youth, their families, and allies.

[lyric.org](https://lyric.org)

### SF LGBT Center

"Connects community members to opportunities, resources, and each other." Programs and mental health services available for LGBTQ youth ages 16-24.

[sfcenter.org/program/youth-services](https://sfcenter.org/program/youth-services)

### SF Health Center

Health center operated by Planned Parenthood Northern California.

[plannedparenthood.org/health-center/california/san-francisco/94110/san-francisco-health-center-3997-90200](https://plannedparenthood.org/health-center/california/san-francisco/94110/san-francisco-health-center-3997-90200)

### Huckleberry Youth Programs

"Strengthens families and empowers young people with services that promote safety in times of crisis, physical and emotional health and well-being, social justice in communities facing inequity, and educational success."

[huckleberryyouth.org](https://huckleberryyouth.org)

24-Hour Teen Hotline, Call 415-621-2929

### Dimensions Clinic

"A clinic for youth in the Castro." Serving youth ages 12-24, located at the Castro Mission Health Center.

[sf.gov/location--dimensions-clinic-trans-and-queer-youth](https://sf.gov/location--dimensions-clinic-trans-and-queer-youth)

### UCSF Child and Adolescent Gender Center (CAGC)

"Offers comprehensive medical and psychological care, as well as advocacy and legal support, to transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and adolescents."

[ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/clinics/child-and-adolescent-gender-center](https://ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/clinics/child-and-adolescent-gender-center)



# Resources for Parents and Caregivers of LGBTQ+ Youth

## National and Local Resources near San Francisco, CA

### Our Family Coalition

A Bay Area local organization that “advances equity for the full and expanding spectrum of LGBTQ families and children through support, education, and advocacy.”

[ourfamily.org](http://ourfamily.org)

### Somos Familia

A Bay Area local organization that “builds leadership in our Latinx families and communities to create a culture where people of diverse genders and sexual orientations can thrive.”

[somosfiliabay.org](http://somosfiliabay.org)

### The Family Acceptance Project

A family support organization for families of LGBTQ+ people, who offer a range of publications, including resources for parents in Chinese and Spanish, and faith based resources, to name a few.

[familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu)

### PFLAG

“Works to create an equitable, inclusive world where every LGBTQ+ person is safe, celebrated, empowered, and loved.”

[pflag.org](http://pflag.org)

### Gender Spectrum

“We help families, organizations, and institutions increase their understanding of gender and consider the implications that evolving views have for each of us.”

[genderspectrum.org](http://genderspectrum.org)

### The Trevor Project

“The leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention nonprofit organization for LGBTQ+ young people.” The Resource Center offers knowledge for LGBTQ+ young people and their loved ones.

[thetrevorproject.org/resources](http://thetrevorproject.org/resources)

### Strong Family Alliance

“Focused on supporting parents of children in the LGBTQ+ community.”

[strongfamilyalliance.org](http://strongfamilyalliance.org)

### My Kid is Gay

“Helping families understand their LGBTQ kids.”

[mykidisgay.com](http://mykidisgay.com)

### “The Gender Book”

A downloadable workbook pdf for parents and anyone else to explore their gender, and the concept of gender.

[thegenderbook.com](http://thegenderbook.com)

### “Being Not Straight”

A helpful, cheeky video for understanding aromantic and asexual identities.

For access, please scan the QR code with the camera app on your smartphone.



### “Supporting LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents”

A guide produced by the Children’s Bureau.

For access, please scan the QR code with the camera app on your smartphone.



### “Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships and your LGBTQ+ Child”

A guide produced by OneLove.

For access, please scan the QR code with the camera app on your smartphone.



For Parents and Caregivers  
of LGBTQ+ Youth

# Support Guide

Thank you for reading!

If you are looking for SFUSD-specific supports, we recommend checking out [sfusd.edu/lgbtq-student-services](https://sfusd.edu/lgbtq-student-services) for resources and more.

If you have any questions, you may reach out to [lgbtq@sfusd.edu](mailto:lgbtq@sfusd.edu).

SFUSD is deeply grateful to Portland Public Schools who conceptualized, guided the initial design and creation of this beautiful guide. Thank you to their entire community for allowing us to adapt their words and work to support our families.



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Arcto Design  
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