



TIPS FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS OF TRANSGENDER YOUTH

BACKGROUND

1. A growing number of youth are realizing that they are transgender — a person whose gender is different from their birth sex (often called the sex that they were “assigned at birth.”)
2. For some parents/guardians, it is a big surprise to learn that a child is transgender, while for others, it makes sense right away.
3. Some parents/guardians feel confused, sad, or disconnected when they first learn that a child is transgender and feel that they need to get to know their child again.
4. Even when parents/guardians are not surprised or sad, many feel worried about their child’s safety, happiness, and future. Most parents/guardians feel unprepared to help their child navigate life as a different gender, particularly in relation to peers, siblings, school administrators, family, and faith communities.
5. You, your child, and your family deserve love and support. Many families are uncertain about how to find knowledgeable, affirming health care, counseling resources, friends and role models for their child, and support for themselves — especially early on after learning that a child is transgender. Many families find that the beginning of this journey is the hardest and that, with time and support, life gets easier.



THINGS TO SAY TO YOUR CHILD

1. I don’t understand this yet, but I am trying, and, I love you.
2. What name do you want me to call you? What gender pronouns do you use (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs or another pronoun)? I might mess up sometimes, but I will try.
3. You deserve to be loved and respected; I love and respect you. If anyone hurts or disrespects you, come to me and we will figure it out together.
4. You deserve to feel good about yourself, and I support you. If you feel sad or worried, come to me and we will figure it out together.
5. You will always have a place to live, even if we argue.
6. How do you feel the same? How do you feel different? What worries do you have?
7. You may have known for a while that you are transgender, and you may be in a rush to start living as your true gender, but this is new for me. Please try to be patient while I catch up because I want to and I will.
8. Let’s remember to have fun together even when things are hard. What things would you like to



do together? Maybe something we used to do together or maybe something new?

9. Many communities of faith affirm a universal love and respect for everyone, believing that we are all loved by a higher power (or God) and that we all have value — regardless of our gender and whether it changes.
10. Is it okay for me to tell other people about your gender?
11. If you want to tell other people about your gender, when and how would you like to do that and what I can I do to support you in that?
12. We are on this journey together.



THINGS TO SAY TO OTHERS

1. My child is transgender and should be treated as a **[Boy, Girl, Another Gender]** when they are here. Please call my child **[Preferred Name]** and use the pronouns **[Gender Pronouns]** as this is how they identify and feel best about themselves.
2. I love my child and want them to feel happy and comfortable at this **[School, Church/Mosque/Temple, Family]**. Please look out for my child, and let me know if anyone acts in a disrespectful manner towards them.
3. If you see that my child is struggling, please let me know right away. Many transgender children feel depressed, anxious, and suicidal when they are not recognized or respected for who they are. Research shows that transgender kids are resilient when they are accepted for who they are, and that trying to change them causes them harm.
4. I realize that this may be hard or different for you (or your organization), but you can only imagine how hard this has been for my child.
5. This **[School, Church/Mosque/Temple, Family]** is really important to us, and we hope that you will still embrace us with this change in our lives. We are under a lot of stress right now and could use your love and support.

RESOURCES

Maine

OUT Maine: works toward a welcoming and affirming Maine for all rural young people of diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities. In partnership with their allies and families, OUT Maine supports, educates and empowers these youth in their journey from adolescence to adulthood. <https://outmaine.org>

The Gender Clinic Barbara Bush Children's Hospital: Supporting the health and wellbeing of transgender, gender diverse and questioning youth across Northern New England <https://maine-health.org/barbara-bush-childrens-hospital/services/the-gender-clinic>

Trans Youth Equality Foundation: provides education, advocacy and support for transgender and gender non-conforming children and youth and their families. <http://www.transyouthequality.org>

PFLAG Houlton: support groups for parents janddholden@myfairpoint.net

PFLAG Waterville: support groups for parents (207) 873-4444

PFLAG of Portland: support groups for parents <https://www.pflag-portlandmaine.org>

Outright L-A: safe and affirming environments for youth ages 12-21 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or questioning. <http://www.outrightla.org>

Portland Outright: supports underserved members of the LGBTQ+ youth community. <https://portlandoutright.org>

GLAD: info about legal rights glad.org

National

- Trevor Project 24/7 Suicide Hotline for LGBTQ youth 1.866.488.7386 thetrevorproject.org
- Family Acceptance Project familyproject.sfsu.edu
- PFLAG pflag.org • pflag.org/publications
- Gender Spectrum (varied resources, particularly related to a nonbinary/gender expansive, identity) genderspectrum.org
- Human Rights Campaign hrc.org



This tipsheet was developed by Kerith Conron with support from the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth. Special thanks to Melissa MacNish, LMHC, sayftee.com, for reviewing this resource. State agencies that wish to replace Massachusetts resources with local resources should contact kconron@post.harvard.edu to access a modifiable PDF of this tipsheet.