OUR CHILDREN:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR FAMILIES OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, GENDER-EXPANSIVE AND QUEER YOUTH AND ADULTS

PFLAG
pflag.org

If you or a loved one needs immediate assistance,
please turn to the inside back cover for a list of crisis helplines,
contact us at info@pflag.org, visit our website at pflag.org,
or call (202) 467-8180 to find the PFLAG chapter nearest you.

ABOUT PFLAG

Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the extended family of the LGBTQ community. Made up of families and allies united with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ), PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy. PFLAG has more than 400 chapters and 200,000 members and supporters crossing multiple generations of American families in major urban centers, small cities, and rural areas in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. This vast grassroots network is cultivated, resourced, and supported by the PFLAG National office (located in Washington, DC), the National Board of Directors, the Regional Directors Council, and our many advisory councils and boards. PFLAG is a nonprofit organization not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

Our Vision. PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Our Mission. By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

- Support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ
- Education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ
- Advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ

About this publication:

This guide focuses on providing support for parents, caregivers, families and friends of people who are LGBTQ, with an emphasis on sexual orientation and gender expression. For detailed information specific to gender identity and people who are transgender, please visit **pflag.org/ourtranslovedones** to download a free copy of *Our Trans Loved Ones: Questions and Answers for Parents, Families, and Friends of People Who Are Transgender and Gender Expansive.*

Our experiences, expertise, knowledge, and resources are always evolving and, therefore, we encourage you to visit our website (**pflag.org**), as well as check with medical, behavioral health, social services, and other professional providers, or local support groups—including PFLAG chapters—for the most up-to-date information on LGBTQ experiences.

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Written By:
Liz Owen

Edited By:
Liz Owen
Elizabeth Kohm

Copy Editor:
Joellen Shiffman

Content Review Team:
Conal Charles
Jamie Curtis
Kathy Godwin
Kay Holladay
Dawn Holt
Jody Huckaby
Elizabeth Kohm
Jean-Marie Navetta
Elijah Perry

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WE'RE GLAD YOU FOUND PFLAG!

You're likely reading this publication because your child (or a loved one—we'll use both terms throughout, interchangeably) has come out to you, that is, they've shared with you that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Some parents and caregivers are surprised to learn this information from their child; others are both surprised and ill-prepared to hear about it from a friend, school counselor, neighbor, or online social networking site. And still others may already have an inkling that their child might be LGBTQ but aren't sure when, how, or if they should address it.

We believe we know our children better than anyone, so when a child or a loved one comes out (reveals themselves to be LGBTQ) and we hadn't a clue—or we knew but either denied it to ourselves or patiently waited for them to share the information in their own time—it can make us feel like we didn't know them as well as we thought we did…or at all.

Everyone has a vision or dream for their child's future, born of many things including personal experiences, family history, cultural or societal expectations, and more. When presented with your child's disclosure or coming out, it may be an adjustment to understand and realize that this future might now differ from that vision or dream.

Remember, this is not an end to your dreams for your child or loved one, nor is it the end of your relationship. On the contrary, your relationship can become even stronger, because you know more about them now than you did before. In fact, it is a likely sign that your child trusts you: If they are telling you, they are making a choice to share this most personal information about themselves.

Reactions vary, from "Now that I know, what can I do to support my child?" to "How will I ever handle this?" For some people, it's a combination of these two reactions…and more. There is no doubt that people have different and potentially complex responses and feelings to a loved one coming out,

but this is absolutely normal, given that you are receiving news that the path you and your loved one are now on is potentially different and unknown from one you expected or for which you had prepared.

Whatever your reaction, both PFLAG National and our network of PFLAG chapters across the country are here to provide the information you need to understand your reaction to the news and your child's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and to respond in a way that is supportive and loving. Our members—parents, caregivers, family members, allies, and LGBTQ people themselves—reside in communities in every state across the country, and represent a wide array of political, religious, and cultural perspectives. Simply put: We either have been, or are, exactly where you are now.

Before we delve more deeply into the issues, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **You're not alone.** Every day, for more than 40 years, people have turned to PFLAG looking for support, resources, and answers to their questions. There are more than 400 PFLAG chapters across the country full of people just like you. According to the Williams Institute, an LGBTQ research think tank, there are more than eight million self-identified LGB people in the U.S., and approximately 1.4 million adults who identify as transgender. Other research shows that eight in ten people in the U.S. personally know someone who is LGB, and one in three people know someone who is transgender. In other words, although it may not appear so, there are LGBTQ people everywhere, and there are supportive families and allies everywhere, too. You are not alone in this process.
- **Your reaction is valid.** There is no one way to react to learning that your child or a loved one is LGBTQ. Some feel happy that their child opened up to them, others feel relief that they know more about their child and can help them navigate the world with this information to guide them, while others feel joy that their child is confident in their self-awareness. Others may have more difficult or complex emotions, feeling fear for their loved one's safety, guilt thinking they may have somehow caused their loved one to be LGBTQ, sadness that they did not know without being told, or anger that their child did not tell them sooner. These are all normal feelings…and you may experience some or all of them simultaneously!

- **You're on a journey.** The path has not only been walked by others before you, there are others traveling the same road, right now, having a similar experience in their own family. Like every journey, this one will have its twists and turns, but know that many families before you have taken the same path. Addressing your reaction, responding to your child, learning about LGBTQ issues, sharing this information with your family and friends, all of these things take time. Know that it is okay to be okay immediately, or okay not to be okay overnight. Take the time you need to explore your feelings. You can emerge from this period with a stronger relationship with your child than you've ever had before, and arrive in a place that is better than where you started: Closer to your child, closer to your family, and perhaps closer to a vibrant community you might never have known existed.
- **You're important.** Self-care is crucial, which means that even as you are learning how best to support your child or loved one, you must also find support for YOU! Whether you feel isolated or nervous—or interested and excited to connect with other families—it's important not only to find and talk to people who have gone through what you're going through, but to have information and resources at your fingertips—like those offered at **pflag.org**—right when you need them. This is especially true if your emotions are less positive, as you'll need a safe place to work through those feelings. PFLAG meetings are a great and confidential way to find people who have gone through similar experiences, and those in attendance and leading the meetings can point you towards crucial resources such as books to read, telephone helplines to call, websites to visit, movies to watch, and more. You can find a chapter near you by visiting **pflag.org/findachapter**. Many local members and chapters can also be found through social media, especially Facebook. Alternatively, you can contact us at **info@pflag.org**, via Facebook at **facebook.com/pflag**, or via Twitter at **twitter.com/pflag** so that we can connect you with other PFLAGers for support.

The Basics: Sexual Orientation, Gender Expression, and Gender Identity

What is sexual orientation? What is gender expression? What is gender identity? And how are they all related? We know this can be confusing, so let's start at the beginning.

When a baby is born—and thanks to modern technology, often long

before—a doctor takes a quick look at its visible sex organs, and assigns that baby a sex. From this *assigned sex*, we assume the baby's gender. (For more definitions of terms, see the glossary, starting on p. 26).

For the vast majority of people, their *gender identity*—that is, their internal sense of being male, female, somewhere in between, or neither—matches the assignment given to them at birth. For others, their gender identity does not correspond with that assignment, and those individuals often refer to themselves as transgender. For those individuals, there is a disconnect between how others perceive them based on outside physical characteristics and their internal sense of themselves.

> ***"For me, it was my son saying to me, 'Dad, I'm the same person I was before.' Now it's been six months, and I realize even more that really, nothing has changed in his life. It was my perception of him that change."***
>
> ***— Anonymous, Father of a gay child***

This internal sense of gender identity happens at a very young age. Think back, for example, to when you first knew yourself to be the gender you are. It is likely that it was so early in your development that you may not even remember it. For people who are transgender, this sense of gender identity also happens at a very young age. However, it becomes more top of mind, as their outward sex characteristics don't necessarily match their inner sense of themselves.

There are also those who don't define themselves specifically as male or female: Perhaps they identify as both, or as neither, but they don't necessarily feel that their internal sense of self is at odds with their biological sex. They may refer to themselves as *genderqueer*. These are just a few of the terms used to describe gender identity.

Everyone demonstrates their gender—that is, communicates their gender identity in a manner that is comfortable for them—through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, or other outward presentations or behaviors. That is called *gender expression*. When one doesn't strictly adhere to societal norms of "masculine" or "feminine" in their gender expression—or their gender expression does not coincide with their assigned gender—we refer to that as an example of being *gender expansive*, *gender nonconforming*, or *gender creative.* (For more on what it means to be gender expansive, turn to the expert opinion from Diane Ehrensaft on page 17).

As a child gets older, they will potentially become aware of feelings of attraction—physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, spiritual—towards other people. These multiple attractions describe their *sexual orientation*. According to research conducted by Dr. Caitlin Ryan of the Family Acceptance Project, adolescents said they were attracted to another person of the same gender at about age 10. Some knew they were gay at age 7 or 9. Overall, they identified as LGB, on average, a little older, at around age 13.

> ***"I waited until I was 26 to admit to myself I might be gay. I was so ashamed of it that I buried my sexuality down in the very deepest recesses of my mind and heart."***
>
> ***— Anonymous, 43, Seattle, WA***

It is important to note that sexual orientation is separate and distinct from gender identity and gender expression. In fact, people who are transgender can identify their sexual orientation as gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, or queer—meaning someone who defines their sexual orientation outside of the above definitions—just like a non-transgender person can. Also separate and distinct from sexual orientation is *sexual behavior*, meaning that one may identify their sexual orientation—or to whom they are attracted—one way, but their behavior sometimes may not be in accordance with that orientation.

Sexual orientation. Gender identity. Gender expression.

Each one separate, each one distinct, and each of us has all of them!

[NOTE: If your loved one has come out to you as transgender, we encourage you to visit our website, **pflag.org/ourtranslovedones**, to download a free copy of our publication *Our Trans Loved Ones*, which focuses exclusively on how to support a transgender loved one.]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is my child gay (or bi or queer…)?

When something unexpected happens our first thought is, "Why?" Even those families that are completely accepting of their child's sexual orientation or gender identity sometimes wonder, "How did this happen?" It is okay to ask the question, and here is the answer: Nothing you or anyone else did made your child LGBTQ. LGBTQ people come from all types of families—from faith-based to atheist families, conservative to liberal families, families of every ethnicity and every economic background, with a variety of physical and behavioral abilities. They come from one-parent households, two-parent households, households with stepparents, and multi-generational and multi-ethnic families. They live in every kind of community, large and small. There is no valid research from any mainstream or scientifically sound source that shows that any factors related to how you raise your child contributes to their sexual orientation or gender identity, nor is there any research that points conclusively to any one genetic or biological "cause."

The important thing to keep in mind is that your loved one is the same person they were before they came out to you. What has (perhaps) changed is your *perception* of your loved one, the image you may have had of them, or the understanding you thought you had of their inner world. For some, this new unexpected journey or shift of perception is an easy transition, while for others it can be difficult, but know that it can be replaced with a newer and more clear understanding.

How should I respond?

As much as you are able, lead with love. For some, this will be the natural response. For others, long-held beliefs may get in the way of being able to respond positively and supportively. As best as you can, however, remember this: No matter how easy or difficult learning about your child's sexual orientation is for you, it probably was extremely difficult for them to come out to you, given the fears and concerns noted above. And if your child or loved one was "outed" by someone else, it can make the situation potentially more difficult.

It is very likely that your child or loved one will be worried about losing your love. They might be worried about your reaction and response, and may even be worried about losing their family and their home. Sadly, in too many cases, all of these things have happened and continue to happen, with examples being shared in the media, in your community, or even previously in your own family. It is no wonder, then, that many people who are LGBTQ fear this unknown response prior to coming out.

> ***"I hope one day we no longer have to 'come out.' That it is a non event. Being gay is no different than having green eyes in my opinion."***
>
> ***— Josh G., 23, San Antonio, TX***

Although there is no one perfect way to react, *your response to your child, regardless of those feelings, will make an impact on both your child's wellbeing and your relationship with them moving forward.* Therefore, while it is sometimes challenging to control an initial response or feeling, feeling guilty or embarrassed about that feeling or response should never dissuade you from trying again and doing better; it is possible to change course and then determine how you will respond more positively as you move forward.

If you are not in an immediate place of support and understanding—and as you work towards getting there—do your best to try and remember the following: Positive, supportive responses lead to healthier LGBTQ people. What does this mean for you? First and foremost, it means finding a place for yourself—away from your child or loved one—to share the emotions you are having if you are concerned that they might have a negative impact. This allows you to be there for your loved one, as best you can, in a positive and supportive way, while at the same time giving yourself time and space to honor your own emotions as you work through them. PFLAG is an essential resource, providing just this type of outlet for thousands of people who are right where you are now. And there are many ways to connect: chapters have local in-person meetings, online groups on Facebook, chats via Twitter, telephone helplines, and can be reached via email. To find your local chapter, visit **pflag.org/findachapter**, or contact the national office at **info@pflag.org** for referral information.

Dr. Caitlyn Ryan conducted research that followed families going through the coming-out process. The conclusions reached from this study highlight the powerful role parents play in their LGBTQ child's health: Certain

response behaviors reduce a child's risk for both physical and behavioral health problems. These include:

- **Speaking with—and listening to—your child about his or her LGBTQ identity.** Give your child ample opportunity to open up and share their thoughts and feelings. Whether they want to talk about their hopes for the future, or a situation that happened in school or at work that day, the prospect for open discussion is endless. If you have a sense that your loved one might want to talk, but isn't doing so on their own, a gentle open-ended question, such as, "How did things go at school/work/church" today, can open the door to dialogue. Don't push, and really listen when they talk. If you make a misstep in your response—whether accidentally using incorrect pronouns (see "Preferred Gender Pronouns" in the glossary at the end of this publication) or asking a too-personal question—apologize; no one is perfect. It is in making the attempt that you show your love and support.
- **Supporting your child's LGBTQ identity, including their gender expression, even though you may feel uncomfortable.** Despite your potential discomfort, your LGBTQ loved one needs your support. This support can take a wide variety of forms, from welcoming their LGBTQ friends into your home, to taking them shopping for that just-right piece of clothing they've been asking for, to helping provide access to age-appropriate resources, such as books and films. Imagine how supported your loved one will feel when you speak positively about an LGBTQ character you saw on television, or share a news article on a related issue. Showing an interest in their lives, inclusive of their whole selves, is a subtle-but-powerful way to show that you care.
- **Connecting your child with an LGBTQ role model.** If you come to support easily, it may be because your family or social circle already includes people who are openly LGBTQ. If this is the case, connecting your newly out loved one with the other LGBTQ people in your life—or other positive LGBTQ role models found through friends or behavioral health professionals—offers the opportunity to see not only that you are comfortable connecting with and being close to people who are LGBTQ (a subtle message of support), but also gives youth the chance to see people who are LGBTQ living their lives positively, with friends and family who love them. Showing a young LGBTQ person that the positive

possibilities for their future are endless, offers hope and support in a significant and impactful way, and directly positively affects their health and wellbeing.

- **Expressing your unconditional love for your child.** Saying "I love you" is, of course, one obvious way to express your love for your child. But it is true that actions speak louder than words, and taking any—or all—of the steps above will help ensure your child that they have your love and support no matter what. And if you find yourself at a loss for words, sometimes a simple hug can be the best response.

Can my negative feelings or responses harm my loved one?

Dr. Ryan's research has shown that LGBTQ youth are:

- Nearly six times as likely to report high levels of depression
- More than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide
- More than three times as likely to use illegal drugs, and
- More than three times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases

These are staggering statistics—but they can be mitigated by your actions.

Of course, overt negative actions such as hitting your child, name-calling, or kicking them out of the house are the most obvious to avoid (although it is worth noting that there are many now-supportive parents and caretakers whose journeys started with one of these reactions, and they came not only to a place of understanding and support, but were able to make amends to their LGBTQ loved ones and move forward from there). But even the most well-meaning person can act in ways that are subtly unsupportive or negative, whether it's blocking access to LGBTQ friends, events or resources, making your child keep their LGBTQ identity a secret and not letting them talk about it, or pressuring your child to conform to more stereotypical gender expression or behavior.

There are also subtle communications that can hurt a loved one who is LGBTQ, whether it's making or sharing a joke that seems innocuous to you, disparaging openly LGBTQ people you see in the media, or even telling an LGBTQ loved one that they are being too sensitive when you do one of the above. It may take time to break some old habits, but making your best effort—acknowledging and apologizing for unintentional missteps—is a real demonstration of love and thoughtfulness.

Try to express your fear, worry, anger, or any other feelings of distress away from your child. Remember, it is never too late to

respond with love and support. Some parents come to a place of support and understanding early, and for others it takes time. The important thing is that you are working towards understanding.

My child is very young, but likes playing with toys and dressing in clothes I usually think of as being for a different gender. What does this mean?

It may mean they are LGBTQ… or it may not. It may mean that your child is simply creatively exploring different ways of playing and expressing who they are…or it may not. Do your best to allow your child this time of exploration, and leave the door open for positive, honest conversation; by doing so, it is more likely they will continue to communicate with you as they begin to understand themselves more clearly, regardless of what they come to understand about themselves. (For more information on what it means to be—and to support someone who is—gender expansive, turn to the expert opinions, beginning on page 17).

> ***"We laughed, we cried, we hugged and life has never skipped a beat. Andrew is the same wonderful, loveable son that he was the moment before he told us he was gay and our relationship as a family is stronger than ever."***
>
> ***— Susan H., 59, Sedona, AZ***

How can I keep my child safe?

They say "Home is where the heart is," and never is that more true—or necessary—than for a person who has just come out. If possible, home should be a safe haven for your child or loved one, a place for them to bring their whole authentic selves, to bring concerns and worries, and where YOU are their safe place to land. This may mean listening to your child or loved one talk about someone to whom they are attracted or on whom they have a crush. Perhaps it means sharing affirming television, movies, and literature between you, or, for gender-creative kids, allowing them to explore the full range of that creativity, whether through clothes, toys, or even a change of name if that's where they are leading you. Of course, it is possible you will still have conflicting feelings. These feelings should be shared, as much as possible, away from your child; this is exactly what PFLAG is here for, whether you attend an in-person meeting or connect with other PFLAGers online or by phone. Remember to visit **pflag.org/findachapter** to connect with a local chapter.

Your worries for your loved one's safety outside of the home are a very real, very valid source of concern. Those worries might make you feel that the best way to protect your loved one is to have them hide their sexual orientation, or avoid dressing in the way that makes them feel happiest and most comfortable. Every situation is different, and your intent to protect your child could be received by them as a subtle message that you don't support them and who they are. If you live in a community where coming out might not be safe for their physical well being, have that discussion with your loved one and share those concerns. Work together to make a decision that lets them know you support them and love them, and want what is best for them and for their safety. If together you assess that it is safe for them to be out when outside of the home, then do your best to advocate on their behalf, whether that means asking others to show respect if you hear them speaking negatively or being at your loved one's side if they should need you.

Concerns abound for many parents, caregivers, and loved ones, whether it's safety in school, workplace safety and discrimination, or supporting a loved one in a faith community, or keeping LGBTQ loved ones safe in social situations. PFLAG National offers resources around all of these issues, and more; visit **pflag.org** to find the resource that is best for you.

One of the most important things you can do to keep your loved one safe is to acknowledge their identity, and understand that, while a person may choose to change their own sexual behavior or gender identity or expression, **sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression cannot be changed by outside influences, such as "reparative" or "conversion" therapy," which is, in fact, a dangerous and damaging practice.** Every major mainstream medical and behavioral health association agrees that attempting to change one's sexual orientation or gender identity does not work and is, in fact, incredibly harmful, increasing the risk for depression, self-harm, substance abuse, and even death by suicide.

NEXT STEPS

The PFLAG National website, **pflag.org,** is the go-to hub for information, resources, and support. From there you can:

Contact a PFLAG Chapter. There are more than 400 PFLAG chapters across the country, each of which provides peer-to-peer support for families, and allies of the LGBTQ community as well as support for LGBTQ people themselves. This one-to-one connection can be a crucial part of your journey. Through PFLAG you will meet people who have either gone through what you are going through, or are currently going through the same thing, and are ready to share and listen. Whether you need support to move forward through difficult feelings about your loved one coming out—or are immediately accepting but need support and education from others about how you can support your loved one—you will find that help through PFLAG. Contact a PFLAG chapter by e-mail or phone, or find one of our chapters on social media, primarily on Facebook and Twitter.

> ***"My mother's last words to me were that of acceptance and love at a time I was filled with fear and hate of the world. My mother will always have the best place in my heart for giving me that gift."***
>
> ***— Christopher M., 29, Washington, D.C.***

Read Other PFLAG Publications. PFLAG has additional publications on specific issues including *Our Trans Loved Ones*, written specifically for the loved ones of people who are transgender; *Be Yourself*, which is geared toward not yet—or newly—out LGBTQ youth; and a whole host of publications from our Straight for Equality™ project.

Do More Research. There is a tremendous amount of information available about the LGBTQ community, parents with LGBTQ youth and adult children,

and anything else you might want to know. The PFLAG National website—**pflag.org**—which is full of articles and information on all of these issues, and more.

In addition to the PFLAG National website, you can connect with us on social media via Facebook (**facebook.com/pflag**), Twitter (**twitter.com/pflag**), Instagram (**instagram.com/pflagnational**), and Pinterest (**pinterest.com/pflag**).

A final thought…

After more than 40 years of working with families, our experience tells us that the unconditional love you have for your child is the most important thing to remember, whether you came to PFLAG already affirming, strongly in denial, or anywhere in between. The process of reacting and responding to your child or loved one's sexual orientation or gender identity disclosure is an opportunity to bring you, your child or loved one, and your family closer. And, if you aren't at a point where you can come out loud and proud as the parent, caregiver, or loved one of a person who is LGBTQ, there may very likely come a point where you can begin to do so. Be patient with yourself, patient with your loved one, and remember: You always have a home in PFLAG.

EXPERT OPINIONS

Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D.,
Director of Mental Health;
Founding Member, Child and
Adolescent Gender Center

What's the first thing a new parent typically gets asked about their baby or baby-to-be?

"Boy or girl?"

We are really asking about the baby's sex, based on observations of the baby's genitals and assumptions about the baby's chromosomes. But nobody yet knows about the baby's gender, who that little person will know themselves to be as male, female, or other, and how they want to "do" their gender—playing by their culture's rules for gender or making up their own as they go.

When it comes to gender, it is not for us to decide, but for the children to tell us who they are, if we give them the chance. And they are now telling us, in words and actions, that gender does not come in just two boxes, male and female, but in an infinite variety of shapes and sizes. We can think of it as a web, with each child, over time, spinning together threads of nature, nurture, and culture to arrive at their own unique gender web, the gender that feels most true and authentic. Their gender web will be made up of their gender identity—their sense of themselves as male, female, or other, and their gender expressions—the clothes they wear, the games they play, the children they play with, and so forth. Like fingerprints, no two children's gender webs will be the same. But unlike fingerprints, a child's gender web is not indelible. It can change and flow throughout that child's life.

Most children discover that the gender they know themselves to be is a match with the gender assigned to them on their birth certificate. But a few will let us know that we got it wrong—our youngest cohort of transgender people. And many will be resistant to their culture's rules and regulations for gender, especially if they are rigidly divided for boys and girls. They may be the boy in the pink tutu, the girl who trades her bikini for her cousin's swim trunks, the boy in the doll corner, the girl enthralled by all the trucks. At the end of the day, we

hope all these clothes and toys will become people things, rather than designated boy or girl things. In the meantime, they will remain the tools children may use to tell us who they are. These are the children we refer to as our gender nonconforming, gender independent, gender expansive, gender fluid children—accepting their assigned gender identities but tweaking their gender expressions. Some may take a short excursion in living in the opposite gender, but not stay there. A fair number, but not all, will explore their gender selves on the way to later discovering their gay selves. Yet it should always be remembered that gender and sexual identity are two separate developmental tracks, not to be confused with one another, like railroad tracks—parallel but crossing at certain junctures.

> ***"Like fingerprints, no two children's gender webs will be the same. But unlike fingerprints, a child's gender web is not indelible. It can change and flow throughout that child's life."***

Then there are some young children who re-arrange both—gender identities and gender expressions. They refuse to pin themselves down as either male or female—maybe they are a boy/girl, or a gender hybrid, or gender ambidextrous, moving freely between genders, living somewhere in-between, or creating their own mosaic of gender identity and expressions. As they grow older, they might identify themselves as agender, or gender neutral, or gender queer.

Each one of these children is exercising their gender creativity, and we can think of them as our gender creative children. In their youngest years, adults around them may make the mistake of saying, 'Oh, it's just a phase." In pediatric thinking, a phase almost always means something negative—like colic or terrible twos—that, to soothe a parent's anxiety, is guaranteed to disappear with time. That is exactly the negative message often sent to confused or curious parents when the pediatrician counsels them about their young child's gender nonconformity, "It's just a phase. Your child will outgrow it."

Indeed, a child may certainly move on from their present gender presentation as they spin together their gender web over time. But most gender-creative children are not going through a phase, and parents don't need reassurance that their child will move away from their gender creativity but rather encouragement and support them to help their child stay with it to become the most gender healthy

child they can be—the child who gets to be the gender that is "me" rather than the gender everyone around them might want or expect them to be.

A young gender creative child will need a psychological tool box and some resilience building to meet up with the challenges of going against the gender grain in a community that might not be ready to accept that child. Parents, siblings, and other relatives will need professional and community support to be the most accepting family they can be—that is a major ingredient for children's gender health.

To that end, parents will need constant reminders that any who have "blamed" them for their child's gender nonconformity will need help learning that parents don't make their children's gender, the children do. Some parents see so much else going on with their child that they are stymied—with all that "noise," how can they even tell if the "gender stuff" is real? That, too, is where a gender-sensitive mental health professional can be a tremendous support in sorting this out. And all of us will need to become allies and advocates for these young children, whether they be transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender, and so forth, to create a social world that reaches toward gender infinity rather than shrinking into gender restriction.

Lisa Kenney, Executive Director; Gender Spectrum

What do you do when your son announces to you that they are "changing their gender," uses a term you've never heard of to describe himself (neutrois, agender, non-binary, genderqueer, androgyne…), and when you didn't know what he meant, he left the room and now won't speak to you about it? Or perhaps your daughter has begun wearing what seem to be men's clothing, binding her breasts to appear more flat-chested, and recently asked you not to use gendered pronouns when referring to 'her' anymore, preferring that you use "they"; you're left wondering if this is just a phase, or if there's something more that you need to understand about your child.

Traditional ideas about clothing, accessories and other expressions of gender are changing. This has always been true as gender norms change over time. However, changes have tended to be slower and more modest. Today's questioning of gender asks that many things taken for granted be given closer examination; conformity is not a given. So what do we do when our child begins to express their gender in new ways, or comes to us and tells us something new about their gender?

There is a generational divide in our understandings of gender. The two genders, man and woman, that most of us grew up with have given way to richer, more complex ways of thinking and talking about gender. For the first time, polls conducted with people in their 30s and younger indicate that they see gender as a spectrum, rather than a binary concept with only two pre-assigned categories. You're not alone if you feel a bit out of touch with what's going on with gender now, or if new pronouns and gender terms seem like a foreign language.

"You're not alone if you feel a bit out of touch with what's going on with gender now, or if new pronouns and gender terms seem like a foreign language."

As you already know, parenting is an improvisation; we figure it out the best we can as we go along, and what seems initially difficult and overwhelming ultimately becomes manageable. This parenting challenge is no different in that regard. There are no simple, one-size-fits-all answers, but there are strategies you can use as you find your way with your child.

Reassure Your Child

Sharing who we are with another person is an act of trust and love. It also leaves us vulnerable. Your child took a risk in sharing their gender with you in the hope that you would see them as they see themself. They will be paying particular attention to what you say- and do- after their disclosure. Be mindful they will be observing you and interpreting your actions so be sure to let them know that you understand the importance of what they told you. Communicate your love and respect for them, reassuring them that what they have shared doesn't change that in any way.

Listen

Resist the urge to talk more than listen when your child tells you about their gender. Sometimes as parents we can fall into the trap of thinking we know our children better than they know themselves. When they tell us something about themselves that doesn't fit the picture we have- or want to have- of our child, we may try to deny it. But listen to what your child is trying to tell you- in all likelihood they had been thinking about this for a long time before they decided to share it with you.

Ask Questions

Language around gender is evolving and the exact same terms can mean different things to different people, so it's important to ask your child

what the terms they use mean to them. Asking "What does this word mean to you?" or "What language would you like me to use when referring to your gender?" helps you understand important information about your child and how they see themself, while also letting them know you are curious and wanting to understand who they are.

If Needed, Ask Forgiveness and Try Again

If you felt knocked off balance, confused, afraid or even angry when your child shared with you about their gender, please know you are not alone and that other parents have felt the same way. If your initial response to your child was negative, poorly received, or simply didn't sufficiently communicate your love and commitment to your child, you can change your approach to one that feels better for you and also supports them. It is never too late to make that shift.

Get Support for Yourself

It is incredibly important for you to have a place that is safe to learn and explore issues related to gender. Connecting with parents who are going through the same process can be a lifeline and an invaluable resource. Go to a local support group or PFLAG meeting in your area, or an online parent support group if that's not possible. Gender Spectrum and other organizations offer workshops and conferences for parents and other family members where you can learn more about gender and connect with others. You're not alone in this process and you'll gain strength in talking with parents from all walks of life who are also navigating this journey.

(This is adapted from *The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens* by Stephanie Brill and Lisa Kenney.)

FIRST-PERSON STORIES

Lori Duron, parent of a gender-creative son

When our son, C.J., was a toddler and started playing with dolls, wearing dresses and drawing himself as a girl, my husband and I became consumed with feelings of confusion, sadness, worry and constant panic to "figure out" our son who seemed to be a girl at heart.

Six years later, C.J.'s penchant for all things pink, glittery and fabulous hasn't changed; but we have—for the better. I wish I could go back in time, give myself a hug and tell myself that things do, in fact, get better.

I'd tell myself to chill out and give things some time. The only way to tell if something is a phase or has some deeper meaning is to wait it out and patiently observe it.

I'd tell myself to search out resources and get educated. Before C.J., I didn't even know the differences between sex, gender and sexuality. This unique parenting journey doesn't have to feel lonely; support, information and a sense of camaraderie are out there waiting to be found.

"C.J. and our family aren't weird, we're just different and if everybody were the same this world would be a very boring place. We paint nails, braid hair, tap dance and smile big. People like C.J. give the world color. We enjoy the rainbow."

I'd tell myself to gather a stellar supporting cast. We'd be lost without our family, friends, pediatrician, therapist and child advocate. It takes more than one or two people to healthily launch a differently gendered child into adulthood.

I'd tell myself to show C.J. examples of other kids like him. Before we were lucky enough to be a part of a gender nonconforming playgroup, we read lots of books about kids who are gender nonconforming or different from the norms of society. Our favorites are *The Boy Who*

Cried Fabulous, *A Fire Engine for Ruthie* and anything else by Leslea Newman. Todd Parr books are great, too.

Most of all, I'd tell myself to enjoy the path less traveled. C.J. and our family aren't weird, we're just different and if everybody were the same this world would be a very boring place. We paint nails, braid hair, tap dance and smile big. People like C.J. give the world color. We enjoy the rainbow.

Our family and its support system have evolved over the last several years. We know that we are here to love our child, not change him. He's absolutely free to be who he was created to be while knowing that we love him no matter what.

Parenting is hard as hell. We used to stop every once in a while and dreamily imagine what life would be like if C.J. conformed to traditional gender norms. Now we wouldn't change our experiences or our son for anything in the world. We are blessed beyond comprehension to have a gender-nonconforming son. It's easy to feel blessed when you get what you expect. But can you feel that way and still be thankful when things turn out not as expected? When things are more different than normal, more challenging than easy? Yes, you can. That is what C.J. taught us.

Don Rogers, parent of a gay son

My wife, Gena, and I have been married 48 years. We live in Texas and have three sons and five grandchildren. Our youngest son, Josh, is gay.

When Josh was 14, he told the youth minister at our church that he thought he was gay. The youth minister called Gena in and said that he did not think Josh was gay but simply going through a phase. They basically shut down any effort by Josh to come out; Gena didn't even tell me about the conversation, and simply ignored it. She told me later that it was incomprehensible to her; she thought it couldn't be true.

For a few years after that, Josh tried to be straight. He dated girls and tried his best to be someone he wasn't. Then at the age of 19, he came out to Gena and me.

I was devastated. I was a fourth-generation Southern Baptist and a fourth-generation Texan. Everything I had known, everything I had been taught, was that homosexuality was a sin and could not be accepted. This was something that had been ingrained in me, and something I had never questioned. So Josh's declaration that he was gay shook the very foundation of my beliefs. It took a long time for us to assimilate what had happened, and each of us dealt with it in our own way.

My way was to turn to research and books. I was a schoolteacher, having taught for 34 years. So I began reading everything I could, starting with the history of Christianity and homosexuality in the church. I researched online, and I read books from both perspectives. Ultimately, I realized that I could reconcile my son and my faith. I came to see that Josh was born this way, and he cannot change who he is. Understanding this changed me completely, and it changed the way I look at other people.

"Ultimately, I realized that I could reconcile my son and my faith… Understanding this changed me completely, and it changed the way I look at other people."

It probably took longer for Gena to accept that Josh was gay. She grieved hard. She never said "Leave" or "I do not love you," but it was incredibly difficult for her. She prayed for a miracle—for God to change Josh so he would not think he was gay anymore.

But then she realized her grieving was about her. It was about her grief that Josh would not bring home a daughter-in-law or give her grandchildren. She prayed a lot, and she started to see that God couldn't change Josh, but he could change her heart. She could love Josh for who he is and not for whom she wanted him to be.

Looking back, I am stunned by Josh's courage. He had a difficult time growing up because kids bullied him. I suppose we should have known that Josh was gay, but for Gena and me, that was not something we even considered. We were confirmed Southern Baptists, I served as a deacon in a very large church, and Josh himself was raised in that church. But Josh had the courage to be honest with himself about who he is.

For the past 10 years, Josh has been in a committed relationship with David. When we were first introduced to David, Gena was still struggling and grieving to accept that her son was gay. She still worries that she was standoffish to David for about a year, maybe more. But now, 10 years later, we both love David and consider him every bit as part of our family. We are so proud of the two of them, both as individuals and as a couple.

In July of last year, Josh and David were married. They first had a ceremony in Fort Worth on a Saturday night, celebrating with their families and friends. It was an absolutely beautiful ceremony and reception — we never felt more love than we did that night. Josh surprised David by singing "When You Say You Love Me." There was not a dry eye in the place.

After the ceremony, Josh and David flew to New York to make their marriage legal the following Monday, as this was before marriage equality became the law of the land. It was painful to us that Josh and David were not able to lawfully marry in their home state where they were both born and raised, but we are thrilled that other families will now not have to endure that pain.

Amelia, mother of a young gay son

Parenting young LGBTQ kids is hard. But mostly, that's because parenting is really hard. (Anyone who claims it is easy is lying or selling something.)

I love my kid. I love every single little part of him. I love that he's such a fierce protector and guardian of his younger brothers. I love that he thinks having bangs that flop into his face is the absolute height of fashion. I love how excited he got when he found out that the "Toads" in Nintendo have no gender. I love how he seems incapable of putting his laundry into the hamper. (Okay, I don't really love that, but it comes with the package.) And I love that he is gay. Because I am his mom, and I love all the things that make up who he is, and this is part of him.

There is nothing wrong with my son. There is nothing wrong with being gay. But his orientation is something that causes me concern. I don't want to change my kid, or for him to be anything other than himself. My concern stems from how the rest of the world is going to react to him, my out-and-proud elementary school student, who has never seen the need for a closet.

So, as the parent of this incredible kid, who I love to distraction, I could use some help. I need help knowing how to be the best mom for him. I need help knowing how to talk to schools about how they are going to protect and celebrate my son for who he is. I need help knowing how to talk to other parents, who think orientation is just about sex acts, and get freaked out when my prepubescent kid tells them he is gay. I need help knowing how to talk to and deal with grandparents and homophobic relatives about my kid. I need help so I can support him and love him and celebrate him for the incredible, rapidly growing kiddo he is. I need this help so that he can grow up into a confident, loving, and wonderful adult gay man. And there is no manual for this. There is no parenting book called, "My Seven Year Old is Gay. Now What?"

Parents like me—parents who love their kids, parents who see their child's orientation as something to celebrate, but who also know that the world is a scary place—need PFLAG, too, because we want to be the best parents we can be…we need PFLAG's help to figure out how to do that.

PFLAG NATIONAL GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The power of language to shape our perceptions of other people is immense. Precise use of terms in regards to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression can have a significant impact on demystifying many of the misperceptions associated with these concepts. However, the vocabulary of both continues to evolve, and there is not universal agreement about the definitions of many terms. Here are some working definitions and examples of frequently used (and misused) terms as a starting point for dialogue and understanding.

Affirmed gender: The gender by which one wishes to be known. This term is often used to replace terms like "new gender" or "chosen gender," which imply that the current gender was not always a person's gender or that the gender was chosen rather than simply in existence.

Agender: A person who does not identify with any gender.

Ally: A term used to describe someone who does not identify as LGBTQ but who is supportive of LGBTQ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Whereas allies to the LGB community typically identify as straight, allies to the transgender community also come from the LGBQ community.

Androgyne: An androgynous individual

Androgynous: A non-binary gender identity typically used to describe a person's appearances or clothing.

Asexual: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are chosen behaviors, while asexuality is a sexual orientation that does not necessarily entail either of those behaviors. Some asexual individuals do have sex, for a variety of reasons.

Assigned sex: The sex (male, female, intersex) that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.

Assumed gender: The gender a person is assumed to be based on the sex they are assigned at birth.

Biological sex: Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that define if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, genes, and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often confused or interchanged with gender, which is thought of as more social and less biological, though there is some considerable overlap.

Bisexual: An individual who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to the same gender and different genders. Sometimes stated as "bi." People who are bisexual need not have had equal sexual experience with people of the same or different genders and, in fact, need not have had any sexual experience at all; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Cisgender: A term used to describe an individual whose gender identity aligns with the one typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Closeted: Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity, or an ally who is not open about their support for people who are LGBTQ.

Coming out: For most people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, the process of self-acceptance that continues throughout one's life, and the sharing of the information with others. "Coming out" is sometimes referred to as "disclosing" by the transgender community. Individuals often establish a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender/gender-nonconforming identity within themselves first, and then may choose to reveal it to others. Coming out can also apply to the family and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender youth or adults when they reveal to others their connection to an LGBTQ person or the community. There are many different degrees of being out: Some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, and some may be out only to themselves. It's important to remember that coming out is an incredibly personal and transformative experience. Not everyone is in the same place when it comes to being out, and it is critical to respect where each person is in that process of self-identification. It is up to each person, individually, to decide if and when to come out or disclose.

Disclosure: A word that some people use intently and others avoid with equal intent, preferring to use the term "coming out" to describe the act or process of revealing one's transgender or gender nonconforming identity to another person in a

specific instance. Some find the term offensive, implying the need to disclose something shameful, while others prefer disclosure, finding "coming out" offensive.

Gay: The adjective used to describe people who are emotionally, romantically, or physically attracted to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, "lesbian" is often a preferred term for women, though many women use the word "gay" to describe themselves. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Gender: A set of social, psychological, or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as male, female, a mixture of both, or neither.

Gender-affirming surgery (GAS): Surgical procedures that help people adjust their bodies in a way that more closely matches their innate or internal gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This should be used in place of the older and often offensive term "sex change." Also sometimes referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), genital reconstruction surgery, or medical transition.

Gender binary: The concept that there are only two genders, male and female, and that everyone must be one or the other. Also implies the assumption that gender is biologically determined.

Gender expansive: Also "gender creative," (or medically, "gender variant"). An umbrella term sometimes used to describe children and youth that expand notions of gender expression and identity beyond what is perceived as the expected gender norms for their society or context. Some gender-expansive individuals identify with being either male or female, some identify as neither, and others identify as a mix of both. Gender-expansive people feel that they exist psychologically between genders, as on a spectrum, or beyond the notion of the male and female binary paradigm, and sometimes prefer using gender-neutral pronouns (see "Preferred Gender Pronouns"). They may or may not be comfortable with their bodies as they are, regardless of how they express their gender.

Gender expression: The manner in which a person communicates about gender to others through external means such as clothing, appearance, or mannerisms. This communication may be conscious or subconscious and may or may not reflect their gender identity or sexual orientation. While most people's understanding of gender expressions relates to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through

androgynous expressions. The important thing to recognize is that an individual's gender expression does not automatically imply one's gender identity.

Gender identity: One's deeply held core sense of being male, female, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced as early as 18 months old and reinforced in adolescence.

Gender neutral: Not gendered. Can refer to language (including pronouns), spaces (like bathrooms), or identities (like being gender queer, for example).

Gender nonconforming: A term (considered by some to be outdated) used to describe those who view their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly female or male. More current terms include "gender expansive," "differently gendered," "gender creative," "gender variant," "gender queer," "gender fluid," "gender neutral," "bigender," "androgynous," or "gender diverse."

Gender spectrum: The concept that gender exists beyond a simple "male/female" binary model, but instead exists on an infinite continuum that transcends the two. Some people fall towards more masculine or more feminine aspects, some people move fluidly along the spectrum, and some identify off the spectrum entirely.

Gender variant: A term, often used by the medical community, to describe children and youth who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform to dominant gender norms. (See "gender nonconforming.") People outside the medical community tend to avoid this term because they feel it suggests these identities are abnormal, preferring terms such as "gender expansive" and "gender creative."

Genderqueer: A term for those whose gender identity is outside of, not included within, or beyond the binary of female and male, or define themselves as gender expansive through expression, behavior, roles, and/or identity.

Homophobia: An aversion to lesbian or gay people that often manifests itself in the form of prejudice and bias. Similarly, "biphobia" is an aversion to bisexuality and people who are bisexual, and "transphobia" is an aversion to people who are transgender. "Homophobic," "biphobic," and "transphobic" are the related adjectives. Collectively, these attitudes are referred to as "anti-LGBTQ bias."

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term often considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the preferred terms, "gay" and "lesbian."

Intersex/differences of sexual development (DSD): Individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. In the past, medical professionals commonly assigned a male or female gender to the individual and proceeded to perform gender-affirming surgeries beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child was able to give informed consent. Formerly the medical terms "hermaphrodite" and "pseudo-hermaphrodite" were used; these terms are now considered neither acceptable nor scientifically accurate. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

LGBTQ: An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is sometimes stated as "GLBT" (gay, lesbian, bi, and transgender). Occasionally, the acronym is stated as "LGBTA" to include people who are asexual or allies, "LGBTQ," with "Q" representing queer or questioning, or "LGBTI," with the "I" representing intersex.

Lifestyle: A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of people who are LGBTQ. The term is disliked because it implies that being LGBTQ is a choice.

Misgender: To refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

Out: Describes people who openly self-identify as LGBTQ in their private, public, and/or professional lives. Some people who are transgender prefer to use the term "disclose" (defined above).

Pansexual: A person whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people of all gender identities and biological sexes. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Preferred Gender Pronouns: A preferred gender pronoun, or PGP, is the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. In English, the singular pronouns that we use most

frequently are gendered, which can create an issue for transgender and gender-nonconforming people, who may prefer that you use gender neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. The most commonly used singular gender-neutral pronouns are "ze" (sometimes spelled "zie") and "hir." Some (as in this publication) also use "they" and "their" as gender-neutral singular pronouns.

Queer: A term used by some people—particularly youth—to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, "queer" is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ community. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer (i.e. "My cousin identifies as genderqueer.")

Questioning: A term used to describe those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof.

Same-Gender Loving: A term sometimes used by members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation (gay/bisexual) without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

Sex: Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that define if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, genes, and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often confused or interchanged with gender, which is thought of as more social and less biological, though there is some considerable overlap.

Sexual orientation: Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. People who are straight experience these feelings primarily for people of a different gender than their own. People who are gay or lesbian experience these feelings primarily for people of the same gender; people who are bisexual experience these feelings for people of different genders, though not always at the same time, and people who are asexual experience no sexual attraction at all. Other terms include pansexual and polysexual. Sexual orientation is part of the human condition, while sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation. One's sexual activity does not define who

one is with regard to one's sexual orientation; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Stealth: A term used to describe transgender or gender-expansive individuals who do not disclose their transgender or gender-expansive status in their public or private lives (or certain aspects of their public lives). The term is increasingly considered offensive by some as it implies an element of deception. The phrase "maintaining privacy" is often used instead.

Transgender: Sometime shortened to "trans." A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Other terms commonly used are "female to male" (FTM), "male to female" (MTF), and "genderqueer." Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as a broad umbrella term to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people with different histories and experiences are often included within the greater transgender community—such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

Transition: A term sometimes used to describe the process—social, legal, or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one's gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control.

Transsexual: A less frequently used—and sometimes misunderstood—term (considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive, and others to be uniquely applicable to them) which refers to people who are transgender who use (or consider using) medical interventions such as hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries (GAS), also called sex reassignment surgery (SRS) (or a combination of the two) or pursue medical interventions as part of the process of expressing their gender. Some people who identify as transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa.

We encourage you to immediately seek out help if you or a loved one needs it, especially if you or your loved one are in danger or have thought about self-harm in any way.

For LGBTQ youth, please contact The Trevor Project online at **thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now,** or call one of the following:

Helplines

The Trevor Project:
(866) 488-7386

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
(800) 273-8255

Ali Forney Day Center:
(212) 206-0574

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Info:
(800) 342-AIDS (2437)

Spanish service:
(800) 344-7432

TDD service for the deaf: (800) 243-7889
[10:00am till 10:00pm EST, Monday through Friday]

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline:
(888) 843-4564

The GLBT National Youth Talkline (youth serving youth through age 25): (800) 246-7743

The National Runaway Switchboard:
(800) RUNAWAY (786-2929)

PFLAG National
1828 L Street, NW
Suite 660
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 467-8180
pflag.org