



SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

For parents

is your child thinking about their sexual orientation or gender identity?

FAST FACTS

- Thinking about gender identity and sexual orientation is a normal part of growing up.
- You're not alone if you feel like you're not ready for these conversations.
- Sexual orientation (who you're attracted to) and gender identity (your sense of self as a boy, girl, both or neither) are different things. Your child may be thinking about one or both.
- Some parents are comfortable with this. Others are not. Either way, it may feel confusing or difficult to know what to say. That's normal, too.
- You don't have to say the perfect words to let your teen know that your love is unconditional.

“WHAT’S LGBTQ+?”

This stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and other terms like Questioning.

“WHAT NOW?”

The best way to show up for your child is to keep listening and talking. LGBTQ+ youth who have accepting and supportive families:

- have better health.
- have higher self-esteem.
- are less likely to be depressed.
- are 3x less likely to attempt suicide.



SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR TEEN

Show support for your child with these tips. See more at familyproject.sfsu.edu

Say, “I love you.”

Ask, “How can I be supportive?”

Welcome your child’s friends/partners to your home.

Support their gender expression (clothes, hairstyle, etc.).

Use the name and pronouns they prefer.

Say, “I’m always here for you.”

Find a supportive church or spiritual community.

Educate yourself.

Speak openly about your child’s identity and orientation.

Tell your teen they deserve and will have a good life.

Expect family members to treat your child respectfully.

Say, “I’m trying to learn and to be supportive.”

Some of these steps might feel easier or more difficult.

Which of these seem most important right now?

Connecting to a parent group can be helpful and shows your child that you want to support them. If there isn’t one in your area, this is a respected national resource for parents and families: pflag.org/.

Getting familiar with terms can also help and shows your child that you want to support them. This website offers some helpful definitions: transstudent.org/about/definitions.

GREAT RESOURCES

For teens and parents: itgetsbetter.org

LGBTQ+ youth resources from the CDC: cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm



Crisis support for LGBTQ youth (the Trevor Project):
1-866-488-7386 OR Text “START” to 678-678

Toolkit for Adolescent Care

For more, visit: z.umn.edu/talk_toolkit | Produced by the University of Minnesota