

Advice for Parents of Trans* Kids, from Parents of Trans* Kids

Be open

- open your ears and listen to your child's life
- open your eyes to see who your child really is
- open your heart, letting go of YOUR wants, your preconceptions, your beliefs, expectations and plans for your child - relinquish them all to make room instead for your child's own dreams, plans and truth
- open your mind to receive what your child's life is teaching you

Don't make your child wait for your support

- you don't have to understand before you welcome, affirm and support your child
- you don't have to feel comfortable before you use the name and pronouns your child has revealed to you
- you don't have to agree with how your child is living their life before you love them as they are

Let go of control

**** Parents of young children (&/or kids with major emotional or cognitive challenges) may need to provide more guidance***

- trust your adult child to know best for themselves what they need to be well
- recognize as soon as possible in the process that like many things with our children, this really is outside of our area of control
- recognize when you are straying into controlling territory (e.g. "I'm just trying to be sure that..." or something along those lines) and make a different choice
- step back and don't offer advice to your adult child, unless it's asked for
- say the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Follow your child's lead

**** Parents of young children may need to provide more guidance***

- follow your child's lead in what pronouns and names to use (even if that changes as they progress in their journey of self-discovery)
- follow your child's lead for when and who and how to tell others
- follow your child's lead for what procedures and interventions they need, and at what pace they are prepared to move
- follow your child's lead for what photos they are comfortable displaying (but keep whatever photos are meaningful to you in a private place in your home and your heart)

Dump out, comfort in

- find other parents of trans kids to talk to about your emotions and struggles (Dump Outwards, to people who are further from the crisis)
- do not dump your uncomfortable feelings on your child; they have their own struggles to deal with, without having to feel responsible to help you with yours
- offer help, understanding and comfort towards your child (Comfort Inwards, to the person at the center of the crisis)

Don't add to your child's burden

- don't add to the suffering your child has experienced before coming out to you
- ensure that your child knows you will always be there for them - they have risked every relationship they have in order to survive - be sure they know they will not lose you
- be sure that your response to your child is not one of the many obstacles they must overcome in order to be true to themselves

Be kind

- be kind to yourself, your partner/spouse, and your child
- exercise radical self-compassion, and compassion for your partner/spouse, child
- recognize that it will be difficult, but so is every transition in life
- be gentle with yourself, understanding that you also are transitioning alongside your child, and it will take time for your heart and mind to catch up to your determination

Treasure your memories

- you don't have to give up your memories of the past to embrace your child's present and future
- you don't have to discard photos (but don't display ones that cause your child discomfort)
- give your child time and space to find their own way to embrace their past, the only past they have

Reach out for help and educate yourself

- don't consider it a weakness to ask for help
- understand the power and love you receive when you reach out and ask for help
- find a trans-friendly therapist if therapy could help you, your child, your family
- find an in-person or on-line support group (there are many)
- keep perspective by listening to other parents further along on the journey, to realize that life will return to normal one day
- read books to learn the facts and understand this shared human experience
- be gentle with yourself, realizing that although this is not all about you, addressing your own questions and issues will help you be most effective in supporting your child

Consider the impact of your words/actions

- be your child's staunchest ally, advocate, defender
- speak up against transphobia wherever you encounter it
- set the tone for how friends and family respond to your child - if you are positive and affirming, chances are they will be too (and the reverse is true as well)
- refuse the privileges of gender normativism - if your child is not welcomed and respected somewhere, then stand with your child

Nothing is more important than your love for your child and the strength of your relationship. In all of your interactions, the guiding question to always ask yourself is: "Will this strengthen or weaken our relationship?"