

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

WHAT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO?



The universal need for security

Whether your child is gravitating towards more gender nonconforming choices in their style, has shared a new name or pronouns, or expressed feeling that their assigned gender doesn't fit how they see themselves, your response as a parent is immeasurably important.

The mental health of transgender and nonbinary youth, like that of all people, is strongly influenced by whether families accept or reject them.

Acceptance, and affirmation of your child's identity, is essential in creating secure family relationships. [Research by the Trevor Project estimates that having an involved, supportive adult reduces gender nonconforming teens' suicide risk by 40%.](#)

About human development

Identity development is a normal task of psychosocial development in which people engage in exploration and self-discovery.

What it means to affirm a person's gender identity is different for everyone. Your child may, or may not, feel a need for gender-affirming healthcare services.

Gender-affirming healthcare includes mental and physical health. Healthcare professionals are guided by a code of ethics which includes competence in developmentally-appropriate services.

For people who are not yet adults; only non-invasive options are available. This may include support through social transition, puberty-blocking medication and hormone-replacement-therapy. A healthcare professional can support informed decisions.



TIPS FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AT DIVERGENT PATH WELLNESS



Essential actions of affirmation



What is the right thing to do?

- Practice using your child's chosen name & pronouns. You can do this alone in a mirror or while driving to support your consistency while with them.
- Support your child's agency in accessing affirming healthcare services.
- Don't play "devil's advocate" as this tends to deteriorate relationships.
- Remember: in parent/child relationships your child is not responsible for your feelings. This is role reversal & creates unhealthy boundaries. Seek support if needed.
- Be accountable for your actions. Apologize when appropriate, commit to repair & follow through.

SHOULD THEY BE IN THERAPY?

While your child may benefit from working with a therapist related to relationship or mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety; exploring their gender or identifying as transgender does not indicate a need for therapy.

It may harm your child's relationship with mental health care, making it difficult to access when they need it, if they are pressured to engage in it.

Conversion therapy, or therapy designed to reinforce gender assigned at birth or "reprogram" LGBTQ+ people, is recognized as harmful and unethical by all professional mental health organizations.

If you, as a parent, are struggling; it may be a good option for you to work with a gender-affirming parent coach or therapist who has a solid foundation working with parents of gender exploring kids.

You can be affirming by offering support & information on resources, respecting boundaries & getting your own support when you need it.