

# FOR PARENTS

**When a child says they would like to try out a different set of pronouns, and maybe workshop a new name with you, listen to them!**

Using an affirming name and pronouns is easy enough and does a huge amount of work on its own. It isn't a rejection of you as a parent -- the fact that they are sharing this with you means they want acceptance, understanding, love. Using pronouns or a name your child has picked out will show that you are listening to them, that you are able to see them as they see themselves (or at least begin the effort to do so).

It likely took bravery to tell you about these internal thoughts and feelings -- they so often go unshared for months or years, and the least you can do is affirm a name or set of terminology that they like. Listening is one of the simplest and yet most impactful things that you can do for your child, at this point.

Ask your child questions about how they feel in this or that situation, and what their gender means to them -- it is important that parents not assume how their child feels in the home environment, or to assume how specifically they relate to their body and place in society. However, asking questions can verge into more harmful territory if the specific questions asked are not respectful. For example -- it would generally be considered uncouth and potentially trauma-inducing to interrogate your children about their plans for surgery in the future, or to ask "how do you think I feel?". Center the person questioning themselves rather than attempting to assuage your own fears, concerns, or difficulties in understanding as a parent.

If there are other members of the family -- grandparents, aunts or uncles -- that your kid feels uncomfortable broaching the topic with, it can be helpful to start these sometimes difficult conversations with the family separately, as well as insisting that they use a preferred name and pronouns. Placing the entire burden of explaining a trans identity on the trans individual themselves can lead to undue trauma, exhaustion and distress -- this is a huge amount of emotional labor to put someone through, especially at a young age.

The affirmation of a parent defending or advocating for their child will also lead to a relationship built more on trust and mutual understanding rather than tension and anxiety.

Along these lines, self-education, while it can be time consuming and frustrating, is one of the biggest things that a cis person, particularly someone in a position of care over a trans individual, can do in order to be a better parent, ally, and supporter. The internet is full of all sorts of resources that explain and show healthy trans identities -- we list many of them here at The Golden Clinic -- and there exist in many places support groups (through PFLAG or other similar organizations) geared towards the parents of queer or trans youth, where parents can work through their difficulties or hesitations with others in a similar position rather than with their kid.

Doing the work or helping to find support groups for your child can also help -- young people are often very anxious about putting themselves in a vulnerable or potentially embarrassing position, and offering to find or bring them to supportive trans or queer-centric groups can help a lot to both build the parent-child relationship and to allow them to more fully grow into their identity and self.

Religious families can often have a difficult time understanding and affirming their transgender children. In these situations and particularly here in NYC, there are often queer religious affinity groups or trans-specific meetings that are associated with churches, where discussions around queerness can be inclusive of a particular families or individuals religious and spiritual practice(s). We also provide religious resources for integration of faith and gender-expansiveness.