

HOW DO I...

Talk to my child about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression?

Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **Open the door to honest conversations.** Create a space where your child feels comfortable asking questions, expressing their feelings, and being their true self. Let them know you'll always be there with a listening ear and that you love and accept them for who they are.
- **Starting at an early age, have conversations with your child** that normalize and celebrate diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Let your child's comfort level guide you.** Encourage them to share as much or as little about their identity as they feel ready.
- **Talking about sexual orientation and gender identity can be an opportunity to learn together.** Approach conversations with curiosity and understanding, and use inclusive, gender-neutral language to welcome discussion.
- **Children learn from what they see and hear at home.** Make sure what you say and do, and how you talk about others, communicates acceptance and inclusiveness.



Scan to watch our video on this topic.

9 Tips for Talking About Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression with Your Child

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

1. **Do your homework.** Before talking to your kids about gender and sexuality, it's important to have an understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression yourself.
2. **Be curious.** This is a journey for both you and your child, so keep the conversation open by approaching the topic from a place of curiosity rather than judgment.
3. **Provide age-appropriate information.** The way you address these topics will depend on the age and maturity level of your child. Conversations can and should start early and become more in-depth over time.
4. **Be a safe harbor.** Research shows that LGBTQ+ teens have better mental health outcomes if they have a safe, validating, and trusting home environment. Nurture your relationship with your child so they know that their home is a safe space.
5. **Watch your language.** Try to use inclusive, gender-neutral language when asking questions. Be conscious to use pronouns and model openness, acceptance, and respect for differences.
6. **Express unconditional love and support.** You may think it goes without saying, but it never hurts to reaffirm your unconditional love and support. Let your child know that their sexual or gender identity will not change that.
7. **Be an ally and advocate.** Regardless of the sexual or gender identity of your child, show them that you are an ally. This might look like pushing for inclusive sex education or speaking out against discrimination when you see it.
8. **Representation matters.** If you or your child don't have examples of LGBTQ+ or gender non-conforming people in your lives, seek exposure to diversity in television, movies, and books. Stories can also be a natural way to start conversation about identity.
9. **Own your mistakes.** If this is all new to you, chances are you will slip up from time to time — and that's okay. Show your kids that you are willing to learn, apologize for your mistakes, move forward, and try again.

[Resource Center](#)

The Trevor Project

[The Family Acceptance Project](#)

San Francisco State University

[Resource Hub](#)

PFLAG

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