

Coming Out Trans To Your Parents & Family

When you come out to your parents as a transgendered person, they need to know that:

- You still love them.
- You are not doing this to hurt them.
- You've had these feelings since you were _____ years old
- You resisted coming out to yourself for _____ years
- You really struggled with it, but it wouldn't go away; - it's SUCH a compelling feeling!
- You are now pretty seriously considering (hormones/reassignment surgery/or _____)
- You have talked extensively with a counselor, met many other trans folks, have done some reading and/or at this point you believe _____ about yourself.
- If/when you change your gender presentation, you will still be the same person inside in many ways.
- You will still have much of the personality you always had.
- You will probably still have the same corny sense of humor.
- You will still love them, music, cats, loud shirts, short hair, etc.
- You will still work, go to college, keep your friends, go to church, and love your children..... (things that are important to them)...
- You might also change in some ways - voice, hair, walk, talk, dress, etc. Be honest about what changes to expect.
- You might look as though you were your twin brother/sister.
- You will give them all the time they need to get used to the new you. You didn't get used to the idea overnight yourself.
- You know the new name is hard; they even get the grandchildren mixed up sometimes.
- New pronouns are even harder. After all, your mother changed your diapers a thousand times and knows your body. Cut them some slack here. (I still slip up after many years!)
- Your love life - what do you expect about your marriage, current partner, future type/gender of partner. Might as well be frank here, even if you just don't know. (I tell my friends I never cared about life after death, but love after transition - THAT concerns me...)
- You realize they may go through an emotional process, too -- shock, denial, bargaining, anger, guilt, sadness, acceptance. Know these symptoms and help them also to recognize them.

Believe it or not, some parents even get to a stage of celebration! We wouldn't want to change our "new" son or daughter, even if we could!

***I often suggest writing a letter to parents or family; read it over, sleep on it, does it say everything you want to say, and in a loving way? Then THEY get to read and reread and respond thoughtfully. Plenty of time to talk in person later. You might also give them something to read or suggest books for them.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN

Your own, nieces and nephews, neighbors --

- Children do not usually need therapy to understand and accept your transition,
- They need the significant adults in their lives to accept the changes, to take them a little casually, answer questions directly, but minimally, until you are sure they want more information. (Why is Daddy wearing dresses? Because he feels better in dresses. Oh!)
- Even young children can understand that some of the things we believe and talk about at home may not be acceptable to others; they can learn to deal with questions at home and not with neighbors, friends, or teachers until you tell them it's OK,
- Older children need to be reassured transgenderism is not contagious & hardly ever inherited; they are not likely to be trans just because you are,
- One parent explained to her young children that being trans felt like going to a Halloween party, coming home and never being able to take off her costume nor convince people that wasn't who she really was, Transitioning is like finally taking off your costume so people can see who you really are. (This seems to help a lot of adults, too.)

IF PARENTS ARE REJECTING

Some parents are rejecting for years, but then come around. Give them things to read, send greeting cards, reassure them of your love, and tell them of your successes. You can't force them; it's not your fault if THEY can't handle it. If you once had a good relationship, chances are you will again,

That's why we caution gay, lesbian and bisexual youth not to come out to family until they have an alternate support group; same for you. There's no real substitute for your family of origin, but you CAN live without them, even have a full and very happy life,

Let this tough experience make you wiser, gentler, more loving, not bitter, distrusting, and cynical. Let it not have been in vain.

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This handout is one of many resources available through **PFLAG Transgender Network**: pflagtnet@triad.rr.com

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