



*Coming Out*

**LIVING AUTHENTICALLY**

as **Transgender** or **Non-Binary**



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

To access this resource online, please visit:

[hrc.im/ComingOutTNB](https://hrc.im/ComingOutTNB)

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## Introduction

From the time that we are born, many of us are taught that we are either boys or girls based on our anatomy. But gender is much richer than that.

In the United States, gender is often presented to us as the mutually unchangeable opposites of either male or female. The truth is that gender is a rich, broad spectrum that comes in as many forms as there are people.

For many, expressing gender is unconscious. It's as simple as styling their hair or choosing their outfit, and causes no angst or uncertainty.

But for those of us whose gender identity or innate sense of our own gender doesn't match with what was assigned to us at birth, unraveling and expressing gender can be complex and difficult.

Many of these individuals identify as "transgender," an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people who experience or express their gender in a way that does not necessarily align with what they were assigned at birth. The term "transgender" covers many different gender identities, such as non-binary, gender fluid, agender, genderqueer, trans man, trans woman, or simply just trans.

This resource will use the phrase "transgender and non-binary" to try to best capture this broad array of identities. That being said, it is important to recognize that not all people in these groups may identify as transgender or non-binary. In addition, there may be transgender or non-binary people whose gender does not fit in any of the terms described above. This resource is meant for anyone and everyone whose gender does not fit what they were assigned at birth. No matter who you are, we affirm you, and your gender is valid.

Transgender and non-binary people often experience a range of coming out experiences. Every individual makes decisions about self-discovery and disclosing their identity to others in different ways and in their own time.

**Throughout this process, you should always be in the driver's seat about whether, how, where, when and with whom you choose to be open.**

No resource can be fully applicable to every member of the transgender and non-binary community. That being said, this resource aims to help you and your loved ones through that process in realistic and practical terms, regardless of what that process may look like. The experience of coming out or disclosure covers the full spectrum of human emotion — from paralyzing fear to unbounded euphoria. We are here to walk you through what that may look like.

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSGENDER OR NON-BINARY?

**Transgender** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. This is opposed to cisgender, a term used to describe people whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Non-binary** is a term used to describe a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. A non-binary person may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or completely outside these categories. While many non-binary people also identify as transgender, not all do.

The way we present our gender to the world is called our **gender expression** or **gender presentation**, and it may or may not be related to our gender identity.

For example, women — whether transgender, cisgender or non-binary — may wear traditionally masculine clothing, altering their gender presentation. Every individual expresses and presents their gender differently, through behavior, clothing, haircuts, voice and many other ways. Though gender presentation is a deeply personal way of expressing who we are, transgender and non-binary people often face significant barriers to expressing themselves authentically.

In order to have their gender expression align with their gender identity, many transgender and non-binary people will **transition**. Transitioning is a process that some transgender and non-binary people go through when they decide to live as their true gender, rather than the one assigned to them at birth. Transitioning can take place at different speeds, with different intensities and in different ways.

## NOTE:

These terms do not encapsulate all of the possible genders that exist across the world. For example, Hijra communities are prevalent in South Asia and Two-Spirit people are common among indigenous communities in North America. We encourage you to research other genders that exist in cultures and nations around the world.

# BEING OPEN WITH YOURSELF



From birth, most of us are raised to think of ourselves as fitting into a certain mold. Our culture, and often our families, teach us that we are “supposed to” look, act and carry ourselves in specific ways. Few of us are told that we might have a gender identity that differs from the body into which we were born or that we might feel compelled to express our gender in ways that aren’t traditionally associated with the gender we were assigned at birth.

There is no one moment when it’s “right” to be open with yourself about your own gender. Some transgender and non-binary people have long struggled to live the lives they think they’re supposed to live, instead of the lives they know they were meant to live. Some come to question or recognize their gender identities and expressions suddenly and immediately begin to transition. Others take more time.

We embrace aspects of our gender identity throughout all stages of our lives — when we’re children or teens, seniors, married, single, with children or without. There is no wrong time in your life to be who you are.

**When you’re ready, no matter when that is, we will be here for you.**

# FINDING A COMMUNITY



Many transgender or non-binary people find it helpful to connect with others who share similar experiences and emotions. A community of peers can help you feel less alone on your new path and can answer questions you might have about next steps.

If you live near a major city, you may find support or social groups nearby. For those living in suburban or rural areas, finding a formal group might be more difficult. But transgender and non-binary people live in every corner of the world.

One place to start is the internet, home to a wide range of transgender communities. Subscribing to an email group, reading or participating in blogs, or joining an online community can help you build connection to your identity and find resources to support your journey.



## DECIDING TO TELL OTHERS

Disclosure of your transgender or non-binary identity to others can be both critical and stressful. Some transgender and non-binary people may feel little need to disclose themselves, while others feel the desire to tell people as soon as they realize it themselves. Both of these timelines, and everything in between, are valid.

**Given the vast diversity of transgender and non-binary people, there's no single rule to be applied as to whether a person should (or can safely) disclose their identity to others. Throughout the self-disclosure process, it's common to feel:**

**Scared • Unsafe • Confused • Guilty  
Empowered • Exhilarated • Proud  
Uncertain • Brave • Affirmed • Relieved**

All of these feelings, and others, are normal, no matter the intensity or duration. Disclosure can be a complicated process. What's important is to check in with yourself and the emotions you are having along every step of the way.

# THE DISCLOSURE CONTINUUM


The world is not the same today as it was twenty, ten or even five years ago for transgender and non-binary people.

For those who transitioned years ago, it was often dangerous to do anything but move to another community and begin a new life. The pressure to stay in the closet about a gender transition was as oppressive as the pressures they once felt to hide their true genders. There were also fewer safe options for non-binary people who felt confined to one of only two genders. But with a newfound sense of community, more and more transgender and non-binary people are choosing to disclose their unique stories to others.

Today, there are more and more people who identify and present as neither men nor women, as both men and women, or as another gender entirely. There is every opportunity to identify and present in the way that feels most right for you.

Transitioning and disclosing doesn't mean that your gender identity or expression has to be the sole, or even primary, aspect of who you are. This part of your life is as natural and acceptable as your eye color, your height and your personality.

It's also important to remember that there is no "right" time in your process to disclose. Some people disclose their gender to others before beginning their transition, some disclose after a milestone in their transition, and some don't



disclose at all. Some disclose to friends first and family later, with family first and friends later, or follow another timeline entirely. What's important is that you disclose to whoever you want at the times that are right for you.

Finally, while disclosure can bring risk, keep in mind that your transition can have a positive impact on others, whether you directly witness it or not. Living openly teaches others that there's more to gender than they might have known and it can pave the way for future generations of transgender and non-binary youth to live better lives. It can also show others — especially those who may be biased or judgmental — that their attitudes are theirs alone, and help them evolve for the better. Almost every day, you will face decisions about whether, when and how to disclose that you are transgender or non-binary.

Always remember: you are on a journey that is uniquely yours and can unfold at your own pace. You, and only you, get to decide how to live it.



# MAKING A DISCLOSURE PLAN



When you're ready to tell that first person — or even those first few people — give yourself plenty of time to prepare. It can help to think through your options and make a deliberate plan of whom to approach, the right time to do so and how to do it. You can also consider asking yourself the following questions:

## **DO I KNOW WHAT I WANT TO SAY?**

Many people are still answering tough questions for themselves and are not ready to identify as transgender or non-binary, especially at the beginning of the disclosure or coming out process. Others may know they are transgender or non-binary without knowing exactly what that means to themselves or to others. That's ok. Maybe you just want to tell someone that you're starting to ask yourself these questions. Even if you don't yet have all the answers, your feelings and your safety are what matter. To work out what you want to communicate, try writing it down.

## **WHO SHOULD I TELL FIRST?**

Who you disclose to first can be a critical decision. You may want to select people who you suspect will be most supportive, as their support can help you share with others. Consider who might be your champion — is it a close friend or colleague, your favorite teacher or professor, a parent or sibling, or another trusted person in your life? Also, know that this kind of news can travel quickly. If you'd prefer that people keep your news confidential, be sure to tell them so. It's also important to plan for the chance that someone, intentionally or not, may share your news with others before you have the chance to do so yourself. That being said, don't be discouraged. Set the boundaries that make the most sense to you and try to do things at your own pace, no matter what that pace may be.

## WHAT KINDS OF SIGNALS AM I GETTING?

Sometimes you can get a sense of how accepting people will be by the things they say. You may notice the way people talk about transgender or non-binary characters in movies or TV shows, or they may share their involvement in LGBTQ rights organizations with you. While these signs are important and encouraging, remember that some people may not react in the way that you expect. The most LGBTQ-friendly person in the office may react negatively, while the person who said something insensitive about transgender or non-binary people might end up being your strongest supporter. Be sure to keep an open mind, and gravitate toward those who support you — especially those doing so with open arms and no qualms.

## AM I WELL-INFORMED AND WILLING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS?

People's reactions to the news that you're transgender or non-binary can depend largely on how much information they have about transgender and non-binary issues and how much they feel they can ask. While more and more people are becoming familiar with lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people and issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression aren't as widely understood. If you're well-informed, open to answering questions, and feel comfortable and safe doing so, it can go a long way toward helping others understand transgender and non-binary identities. Some helpful facts and frequently asked questions can be found later in this resource to help get you started. If you prefer to just send a couple articles or books to people in your life, that's ok too. See the end of this resource for ideas.

## IS THIS A GOOD TIME?

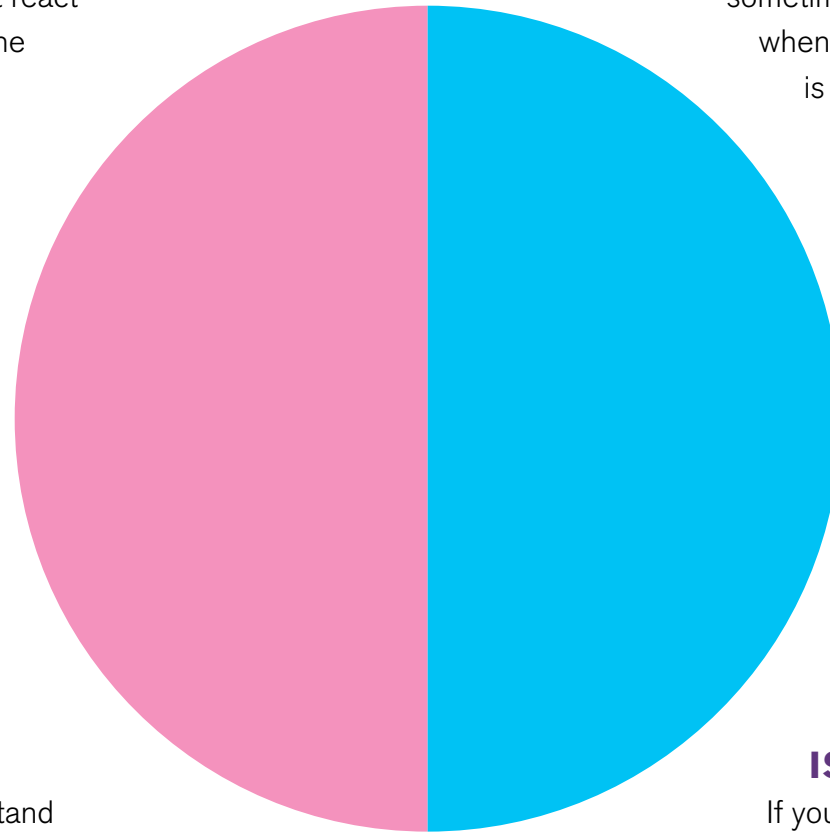
Timing is key, and choosing the right time is up to you. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out. If they're dealing with their own major life concerns, they may not be able to respond to your disclosure constructively. That being said, sometimes it may never feel like the right time to come out. Come out when it feels best for you and when the person you are coming out to is in a position to receive that information.

## CAN I BE PATIENT?

Just as it may have taken you time to come to terms with being transgender or non-binary, some people will need time to think things over after you disclose that news to them. You may disclose to a range of people — family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, medical providers, faith leaders or others — and their reactions may vary. If some react strongly, it's probably because they care about you. Many transgender and non-binary people who disclose their identities without expectations of immediate understanding and who establish an ongoing dialogue find that people who were initially unsupportive can become their strongest allies.

## IS IT SAFE TO DISCLOSE?

If you have any doubt at all as to your safety, carefully weigh your risks and options for disclosure. Transgender and non-binary people face the real threat of harassment and violence that can be fatal. Knowing this, some transgender and non-binary people choose to disclose their identities in a safe space with friends by their sides.



## IS IT SAFE TO DISCLOSE AT WORK?

Though federal laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and many states and localities have laws protecting transgender and non-binary people from discrimination, legal protections do not extend to every area of life. Transgender and non-binary people are still highly vulnerable to violence, harassment and discrimination. As a result, disclosure to someone could have real costs. Visit [hrc.org/transworkplace](https://hrc.org/transworkplace) for a comprehensive guide to and advice on being transgender or non-binary in the workplace.

## WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE REACTS BADLY?

Not everyone will react positively. This is an unfortunate fact of being transgender or non-binary. Our world is changing, but not everyone is there yet. Just as when you change careers, change religions or move to a different city, you may lose friends when you disclose — and they may not be the ones you expected. What's important is that you know your truth, and that you don't let other peoples' uninformed opinions direct your own narrative. You know who you are, and that is enough. It will be hard, but many more people will accept you than you may expect. Focus your energy on them because they are the ones who are worth it.

## WHAT IF SOMEONE OUTS ME BEFORE I'M READY?

Outing someone else is never ok. That being said, sometimes you cannot control where information travels, especially in the age of social media. If someone shares information about your identity before you are ready, it is important to try to find ways to take back control of your own narrative.

If it's safe, you can speak to the person who outed you to let them know that what they did was not ok. You can also speak to the person to whom you were outed, so you can tell them in your own words and let them know who it is and isn't ok to tell. It can also be helpful to develop a support system of people you are out to, so they can help you in times like these. Please see the end of this resource for a list of organizations that may also be able to support you.

# HAVING THE CONVERSATION



It's common to want or hope for positive reactions from the people you tell, but that may not happen immediately. It might help to try to put yourself in their shoes and anticipate their likely reactions, potential questions and next steps.

The person to whom you disclose being transgender or non-binary might feel:

**Surprised • Honored • Uncomfortable  
Scared • Unsure how to react • Distrusting  
Supportive • Skeptical • Relieved • Curious  
Confused • Angry • Uncertain what to do next**

You may want to verbalize the range of feelings they might be having and reassure them that it's ok to ask questions. People will generally take their cues from you as to how they should approach things, so if you're open and honest, you're more likely to get openness and honesty in return. That said, reactions vary and no one is entitled to make you feel bad about your gender identity. Maintain awareness of your own feelings and make a plan for how to process a wide variety of responses.

It's also important to keep in mind that people may vary in their knowledge of transgender and non-binary people. Some people may already be experts on transgender and non-binary identities, some may have deep misconceptions, and others may not even know what those words mean. While you cannot control others' level of education when you come out, you may want to provide them with factual resources that point them in the right direction. See the end of this resource for ideas.



## TELLING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Regardless of your age, you may be afraid your parents or caregivers will reject you if you tell them you are transgender or non-binary. The good news is that many parents and caregivers are able to come to a place of understanding. Though some may never quite get it, others may surprise you by becoming advocates themselves. However, if you are under age 18 or financially dependent on your parents or caregivers, the decision to disclose should be made very carefully.

When you disclose your identity to your parents or caregivers, they may:

- Embrace you with open arms and surprise you by knowing more about transgender and non-binary people than you expected.
- React in ways that hurt, such as crying, getting angry or feeling embarrassed.
- Need to grieve over the dreams they've had for you before they see the new, more genuine life you are building for yourself.
- Already know or have an inkling that you are transgender or non-binary.
- Be unkind about the way you express your gender or say things like, "Well, you'll always be a daughter to me — never a son." It may take time for them to get used to seeing you as you know you are.
- Not know much about transgender or non-binary identities and ask you to teach them with open minds and hearts.
- Ask where they "went wrong" or if they did something to "cause this."
- Think of being transgender or non-binary as a sin, or attempt to send you to a counselor or therapist in hopes they can "change" you.
- Feel a sense of relief.

**Supportive or not, your parents' or caregivers' initial feelings may not reflect their feelings over the long term. Keep in mind that this is big news, and there's no timetable for how long it takes to adjust.**

**“When I first came out to my parents, they didn't even know what the word 'transgender' meant. They were confused and scared. But I was patient with my parents and gave them lots of resources, and they've now grown to become my biggest advocates and supporters.”**

— Kat, Washington, DC

## TELLING PARTNERS AND SPOUSES

One reason that transgender and non-binary people may not disclose being transgender or non-binary is the fear of how partners or spouses will react. You may wonder if your spouse will ask for a divorce or if your partner(s) will suddenly stop loving you.

The good news is that love is hard to stop suddenly. Disclosing that you're transgender or non-binary to those you love most doesn't have to lead to separation. Many couples and families stay together through transition.

Before disclosing to a partner or spouse, remember that they'll need time and patience — just as you'd expect time and patience while working through your own feelings. Counseling can be helpful to many relationships, as can talking with other people who have been through similar situations.

At the end of the day, things may not work out between you and your partner(s) or spouse after you come out to them. Just remember that **this does not mean anything is wrong with you**. Every relationship has a different dynamic and different needs, and sometimes people's lives move in different directions. Although this can be a difficult situation to deal with, your gender identity will forever and always remain valid.

## TELLING CHILDREN

There's no one right or wrong way to have this conversation. Coming out to your children can seem a daunting task. Depending on their ages, you may be worried about them rejecting you or about their safety at school if they tell friends.

If you have a co-parent, you may want to have the conversation together, if that's possible. Or you might find that bringing a grandparent or other supportive family member into the conversation is a good idea. Your children may have questions that they feel more comfortable asking someone else for fear of hurting your feelings. Older children, especially, may need more time to think about the news you've shared with them before they're ready to talk. Conversely, they may be well-versed in transgender and non-binary identities, and embrace the true you.

It may be helpful to arrange a family counseling session to sort through feelings. Giving your children the ability to talk to other children of transgender or non-binary parents can be enormously helpful. Regardless of how the situation proceeds, it is important to remain open and honest throughout this process and have faith that your children will understand.

## FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE

If your family member or friend has come out to you as transgender or non-binary, you may be wondering how to respond. Everyone does so differently. You might be confused and have questions, relieved to know what's been on your loved one's mind, or hurt they didn't tell you sooner. You may feel a mixture of all three of these emotions, or many others. You may not even understand what it is that you're feeling.

Regardless of how you're feeling, it's helpful if you can reassure your family member or friend that your feelings for them have not suddenly disappeared. Let them know you will try your best to support them through this process. It's ok to tell them it's going to take some time to adjust. In the end, knowing that you still care is what matters most to your family member or friend.

If you have questions for your family member or friend, first ask if they are open to answering questions. While many people will be, not all may want to do so. If they indicate that they are open to questions, be respectful. Recognize that your transgender and non-binary loved ones are not your dictionaries and do your part to educate yourself. Don't ask them to speak for an entire community of diverse experiences and perspectives. Many of the answers you are looking for can be found in a range of books, documentaries, websites and support groups — both online and in many cities and towns across the country. Many of the most frequently asked questions are included at the end of this resource

## FOR PARENTS OF TRANSGENDER OR GENDER-EXPANSIVE\* CHILDREN

While some transgender and non-binary people only come to understand their identity as adults, many deal with these questions at very young ages. If you're a parent reading this resource, you're already well on the way to providing a supportive environment for your child. Listen to your children and affirm them for who they are.

It's important to let your children explore their genders without trying to change or pressure them toward one mode of gender expression. There are some circumstances where this may prove difficult — if your child refuses to wear the school uniform for their sex assigned at birth, for example. Not being able to explore their gender safely at school may have a negative effect on your children. Talk to your children to gauge how important these issues are to them and see if school authorities may be able to work out a solution. HRC's Welcoming Schools

program offers many resources for gender-expansive children. These resources can be found at [welcomingschools.org](https://welcomingschools.org).

Many parents of gender-expansive children also pursue family counseling. If you decide counseling is necessary, it's important to let your children know that there's nothing wrong with them. Seeking out a supportive therapist who has experience with gender issues in children is also a wise step. Specific resources and support groups for parents of gender-expansive children are also available.

Above all, reassure your children that differences are to be celebrated and you love them no matter what. Acceptance of diversity is an important value for all children — and adults.

\*We use the term "gender-expansive" as a blanket term when referring to youth, as many youth are still exploring and understanding their genders as they grow up in a way that is hard to define.



# TRANSITIONING



Transitioning is the process by which many transgender and non-binary people move from presenting as the gender assigned to them at birth to their true gender they know themselves to be. Transitioning takes place for every transgender and non-binary person at different speeds, with different intensities and in different ways. There are generally three major aspects to transitioning:

## **SOCIAL TRANSITION**

This refers to living your everyday life as your true gender, and can include changing your name, clothing and/or pronouns.

## **PHYSICAL TRANSITION**

This refers to changing your body to align with your gender identity. This can include haircuts, altering body hair and nails, or changing your use of makeup. The aspect of physical transition that requires doctors is often referred to as a medical transition, and can include hormone replacement therapy, surgical procedures, hair removal or implants, or many other options. Physical and medical transitions are not just limited to binary transgender people, as many non-binary people undergo some form of physical transition as well.

## **LEGAL TRANSITION**

This refers to changing legal documents to align with your gender identity (and name, if you choose to change it). This can involve changing your driver's license, social security card, passport or even your utility bills.

The process of transitioning can take place before, during or after disclosing your transgender or non-binary identity to others. There is no “set” order in which to do things, and transitioning does not always involve medical treatment. For example, some transgender and non-binary people engage in hormone replacement therapy for over a year before coming out to close friends and family. Others may come out years before socially transitioning, and others still may come out the very same day they begin their transition. All timelines have advantages and disadvantages, and it's important to take steps in the order that makes the most sense for your personal situation.

You may pursue medical treatment to align your body with the gender you know yourself to be. In many parts of the world, the accepted clinical guidelines for those who undertake medical transition are known as the Standards of Care. These standards are developed by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), a widely recognized professional organization devoted to the understanding and treatment of gender dysphoria. Information on the WPATH Standards of Care can be found online at [wpath.org](http://wpath.org). It is important to recognize that while these standards are highly regarded worldwide, they are not the be-all and end-all guidebook on how to transition medically. Once again, you must make the choices that make the most sense for you.

Transitioning does not always involve medical treatment. By dressing in preferred clothing, changing your body through diet or exercise, adjusting mannerisms and speech patterns, and requesting that friends, family or others address you with different names and pronouns, you can live closely aligned to your true gender.

Whether you plan to medically transition or not, it can be very helpful to find health care professionals in your geographic area who are experienced in serving transgender and non-binary patients, if possible. If there are no such providers in your area, an open-minded provider willing to learn about the specific health needs of transgender and non-binary people, and willing to speak with more experienced providers, may be sufficient.

### Questions for Health Care Providers:

Have you treated transgender or non-binary patients in the past?

Do you understand hormone regimens appropriate for transgender or non-binary patients?

Do you have any experience supervising medical gender transitions? How flexible are you with what you allow your patients to do?

### Remember:

Do your research first. Even doctors who have had transgender or non-binary patients in the past may not be experts on transitioning, or even be competent in the field. Many websites and advocacy groups can offer guidance on medical transitioning. While the US health care system is extremely complex and taxing to navigate, remember that if you stick to it and don't give up, you can get results.

**For more information on health care and providers, you can visit [queerhealthaccess.com](http://queerhealthaccess.com).**

## AFTER TRANSITIONING

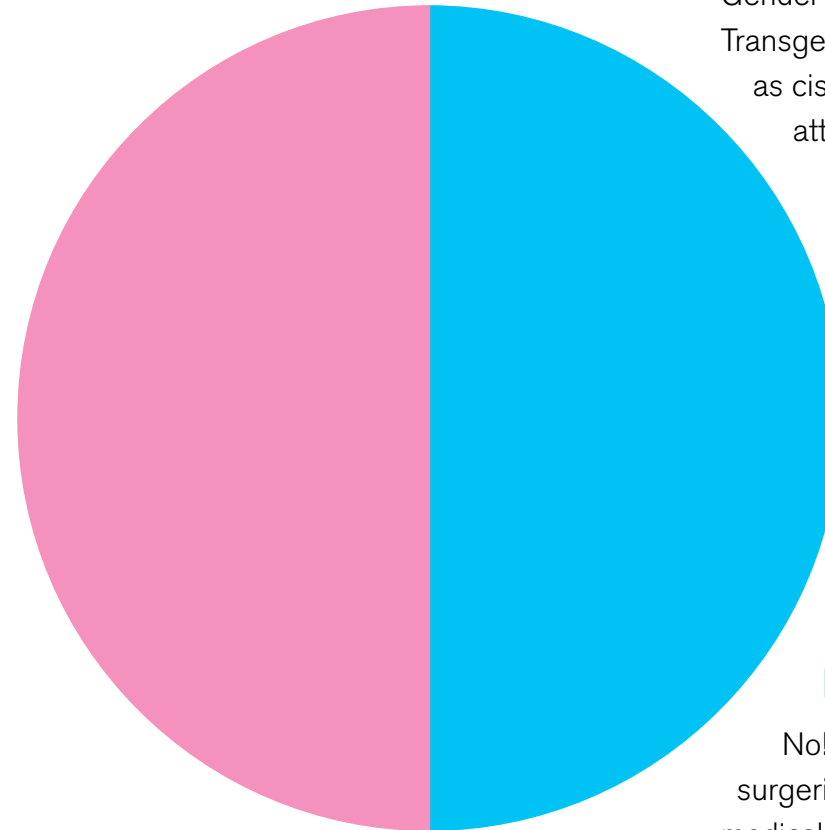
While this resource is primarily for transgender and non-binary people in the early stages of self-discovery, many confront the issue of disclosure again and again after transitioning, or among new friends, family and co-workers. Some transgender and non-binary people may not disclose their gender history after transitioning. Other transgender and non-binary people may find that being more open about their lives and stories can be safe and affirming. Some even choose to speak out publicly about being transgender or non-binary, becoming advocates by sharing their stories in media interviews or by speaking to students at local colleges and universities or to business and community groups.

No matter the level of outness you would like to maintain, the choice is unequivocally yours. You can also shift your level of openness over time, depending on your comfort level. The journey is completely your own, and your choices ultimately belong to you. Your primary responsibility is to take care of yourself — so make the choices that will keep you healthy and at peace.



## FAQ

Here are a few more common questions and answers about being transgender or non-binary.



### Are transgender and non-binary people really just gay?

Gender identity and sexual orientation are completely different. Transgender and non-binary people come in all sexual orientations, just as cisgender people do. A transgender or non-binary person may be attracted to men, women, non-binary people, all of the above or no one at all.

### Can transgender and non-binary people have families?

Absolutely! Whether in a relationship or single when coming out, countless transgender and non-binary people find love and happiness in their lives through families. In fact, many transgender and non-binary people will tell you that after coming out, they feel a new sense of wholeness and happiness that makes them better partners and parents.

### Do I have to have surgery?

No! Many transgender and non-binary people have no desire to pursue surgeries or medical intervention. At the same time, many cannot afford medical treatment or have no access to it. Whether or not you have any form of surgery at any point in your life, your transgender or non-binary identity is still valid.



## Is being non-binary just a step toward being a binary transgender person?

Being non-binary is a completely valid identity in and of itself. Some of us may come out as non-binary, and from there later come out as a binary transgender person. Some of us may come out as binary and then later come out as non-binary. And there are plenty of us who identify as non-binary for our entire lives. What's important is that you present and identify as what feels right for you.

## Are intersex people transgender?

Intersex is a broad term used to describe a wide range of natural biological variations that differ from those classically thought to be typical to either men or women. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all. Some people do not know they're intersex until a late age, or may have had non-consensual surgery performed at birth to modify genitalia.

Like cisgender people, some transgender and non-binary people are also intersex. But not every person who is intersex is transgender or non-binary.

You can learn more about intersex identities through [interACT](#), a group that advocates for intersex youth.

## Is there a specific transition timeline I should follow?

Absolutely not! Every person's transition will look different. You can start with hormone replacement therapy, by presenting as your true gender before you even think about hormones, or any other possible combination. This applies to surgeries too — there is no requirement to get surgery, or “right” or “wrong” time for it. In addition, just because you get a surgery doesn't lock you into a specific identity; for example, a person can get top surgery and/or begin hormone replacement therapy, and still be non-binary. The most important thing is that you communicate your timeline and thought processes with your support team, which can include doctors, family, friends or others.



## STATISTICS

Based on HRC Foundation's analysis of data on youth and adults, there are more than 2 million transgender and non-binary young people and adults in the United States. We are your family members, your coworkers, your classmates, your doctors and are everywhere in your communities. In fact, there are more transgender and non-binary people in the United States than there are Starbucks, McDonald's and Walmart locations in the world combined.

To learn the most recent statistics about the transgender and non-binary community, please visit [hrc.org/transgender](https://hrc.org/transgender).

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS



**AFAB** - Stands for “Assigned Female at Birth.” Used to describe someone whose sex was assigned as female when born, typically based on their external genitalia. While many transgender and non-binary people are comfortable identifying as AFAB, some prefer not to use this term to describe their experience or the experiences of others.

**AMAB** - Stands for “Assigned Male at Birth.” Used to describe someone whose sex was assigned as male when born, typically based on their external genitalia. While many transgender and non-binary people are comfortable identifying as AMAB, some prefer not to use this term to describe their experience or the experiences of others.

**Cisgender** - A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**FTM** - Stands for “female-to-male,” referring to someone who was assigned female at birth, but is transitioning or has transitioned to their true identity as a man. This term is relatively outdated and its use is not recommended, but it can still be seen in some medical and pop culture texts.

**Gender-expansive** - Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender identities.

**Gender expression** - External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

**Gender identity** - One’s innermost concept of self as man, woman, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender non-conforming** - A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**Intersex** - An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural biological variations that differ from those classically thought to be typical to either men or women. In some cases these traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

**LGBTQ** - Stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.” Many people and organizations use “LGBTQ” as a catch-all term for the non-cisgender and non-straight community, but the acronym varies depending on culture and style. For example, some groups may add “I” for intersex.

**MTF** - Stands for “male-to-female,” referring to someone who was assigned male at birth, but is transitioning or has transitioned to their true identity as a woman. This term is relatively outdated and its use is not recommended, but it can still be seen in some medical and pop culture texts.

**Non-Binary** - Describes a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. A non-binary person may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or completely outside these categories. While many non-binary people also identify as transgender, not all do.

**Pronouns** - Any word that can replace a noun or noun phrase and refer specifically to people who are being talked about. Examples of

pronouns an individual may use: She/Her/Hers, He/Him/His or They/Them/Theirs. Some individuals use other less common gender-neutral pronouns, such as Xe/Hir/Hirs, or use no pronouns at all. The phrase “preferred pronouns” is being phased out by the community, as it denotes that gender is a choice.

**Sexual Orientation** - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

**Transgender** - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation; transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Do not use the term “transgendered,” even as an adjective, as it is considered outdated and incorrect. Instead, consider using “transgender people,” “transgender person,” “trans people” or “trans person.”

**Transition** - A process that some transgender and non-binary people go through when they decide to live as their true gender, rather than the one assigned to them at birth.

**Transsexual** - An outdated term that we recommend avoiding.

**Transvestite** - An outdated term that we recommend avoiding. Often used as a slur.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HRC and the HRC Foundation have a catalog of resources for transgender and non-binary people and their families, friends, employers, clergy and other allies at [hrc.org/transgender](http://hrc.org/transgender). You can also find resources specific to transgender issues in the workplace at [hrc.org/transworkplace](http://hrc.org/transworkplace) and to issues in communities of faith at [hrc.org/religion](http://hrc.org/religion).

You may also find the following websites helpful:

## Legal Issues

[National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

[Transgender Law Center](#)

[Lambda Legal](#)

[GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders \(GLAD\)](#)

[National Center for Lesbian Rights \(NCLR\)](#)

## Health Issues

[HRC's Health Resources for Transgender and Non-Binary Patients](#)

[The World Professional Association for Transgender Health \(WPATH\)](#)

[Safer Sex for Trans Bodies](#)

[Trans Bodies, Trans Selves](#)

## Spiritual and Religious Issues

[TransFaith Online](#)

[Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians](#)

[The Black Trans Prayer Book](#)

[Transmission Ministry Collective](#)

[Q Christian Fellowship](#)

[Muslims for Progressive Values](#)

## School Issues

[HRC's Welcoming Schools Program](#)

[Affirming Gender in Elementary School](#)

### **About the Human Rights Campaign Foundation**

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation improves the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people by working to increase understanding and encourage the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices. We build support for LGBTQ people among families and friends, co-workers and employers, pastors and parishioners, doctors and teachers, neighbors, and the general public. Through our programs and projects, we are enhancing the lived experiences of LGBTQ people and their families, as we change hearts and minds across America and around the globe. The HRC Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

**To access this resource online, please visit:**

**[hrc.im/ComingOutTNB](http://hrc.im/ComingOutTNB)**