



**Helpful Tips for
Caregivers of Transgender Youth**



Normalizing Trans Identity

As a caregiver, hopefully you have experienced watching your youth flourish as they begin the journey of accepting their transgender identity.

However, you may also notice experiencing sadness, stress, confusion, uncertainty, and grief. While all of this is valid and normal, it can sometimes be helpful to shift your perspectives to an outlook of positivity and hope.

It can be helpful to remind yourself that being transgender is not inherently bad nor is it synonymous with living a doomed life. One of the best forms of support is to change the negative language and, therefore, the stigma of being transgender!

Stigmatized narratives exist in our society suggesting collectively being labeled trans as something shameful. Luckily, you can refute this and empower your trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming youth by endorsing their self-awareness and uniqueness! You may also find empowerment for yourself as an advocate and caregiver.

Here are helpful reminders:

1. Caregivers can flip the switch and change the language.

What if your youth could live a meaningful, fulfilling life as a transgender human being? They absolutely can! You are your youth's foundation, their rock, their unwavering support that strengthens them enough to rise above challenge or circumstance. Being transgender is something to be celebrated!

2. Caregivers can bolster a child's power of personal choice.

Happiness resides in the mind. You can empower your youth with the belief that they can be happy. You can help them choose joy instead of fear. You can teach them that their differences are superpowers. The rest of the world just hasn't caught up to them yet!

3. We teach others how we want to be treated.

It is only natural as a parent to be scared, confused, and worried about a youth's safety. You can be involved, informed, and protect your youth in many tangible ways. It can also be important to remember that nobody can control every external situation, but caregivers can bolster their youth's confidence. This way, the youth can be the change they want to see in the world.

4. Difficulties can bring empowerment and strength.

Think back on something you are most proud of – was it easy? Probably not.

Many of our most powerful moments and greatest accomplishments were born out of towering obstacles or deep sorrows. You are in an inspiring position to teach strength not fear!

5. Beware of Negative Connotations

Much of the language and news surrounding transgender issues, even when well-meaning, can be depressing or scary.

Here are a few subtle examples:

- "Oh, your child came out as transgender? I am so sorry! Are you doing ok?"

Caregivers should not be made to feel as if something tragic just happened after their youth comes out. Honesty, self-awareness, bravery, and the fact that the child was comfortable enough with the caregiver to share, are things to be proud of!

- "Oh, maybe it is just a phase."

To question whether or not something is "just a phase" can many times carry a negative connotation and implies a form of self-presentation that one needs to grow out of like the "terrible twos" phase or the "rebellious teenage" phase. Nobody ever says "he's going through the all-A's phase" or the "employee of the month phase".

Furthermore, youth should feel free to change their minds or be uncertain without fear of disbelief or invalidation from adults.

- "What bathroom should they use at school? Maybe they can use the nurse's restroom or single-stall restroom."

In this example, some youth may be very happy sharing any kind of separate restroom, but there can also be a negativity associated with using separate restrooms. Youth may have to take more time to walk further, get teased, or be identified as different. Also, in between class-time, including any time with peers, can be an important time for social interaction, and trans* youth can be excluded due to such policies.

6. Transgender people can live normal lives just like people who are not transgender.

Transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people overcome obstacles and enjoy marriages, happy relationships, and fulfilling friendships too! In fact, according to The Transgender Education Network of Texas, between 25% and 50% of trans* adults are parents. They can grow up to be successful leaders, speakers, advocates for minority communities, doctors, husbands, wives, and ministers all while moving through life in their most authentic form.