

# I Think I Might Be Transgender



**Rights.**  
**Respect.**  
**Responsibility.**

 **Advocates  
for Youth**  
Rights. Respect. Responsibility.

**“Don’t get hung up on gendered stereotypes, at least in private. Boys can look however they want—girls too, and everyone else as well. I’m a non-binary man who wears makeup and dresses. It’s all allowed.”**

**- Noor**



# What Does It Mean to Be Transgender?

Nearly everyone is assigned a sex at their birth, based on whether they have a penis or vagina. Most are raised with the idea that boys have penises and girls have vaginas. As we grow up, there's a lot of stuff that goes along with whether we were assigned boy or girl, like what kinds of clothes we wear, how we should look, and how we are expected to act. But for some people, as they grow up they begin to feel like the gender that they are does not match their assigned sex.

For instance, someone born with a vagina may feel, act and identify as a man or someone born with a penis may feel, act and identify as a woman. These folks often describe themselves as transgender or trans. Some folks find that neither "man" nor "woman" fits them and they prefer other terms, like non-binary, genderqueer, or genderfluid. Everyone's experience of gender is valid. Everyone has the right to live as the gender that fits them best.

**"Your life experiences and your own preferences are the most important things to how you define yourself." - Lara**



**Sex** - when you're born, the doctor decides if you are male or female based on if you have a penis or vagina

**Gender** - What defines someone as feminine or masculine, including how people expect you to behave as well as how you feel and identify

**Sexual orientation** - to whom you are sexually attracted. Sexual orientation isn't dictated by sex or gender; trans folks can be any sexual orientation.

**Cisgender** - When your sex assigned at birth and your gender match up as society expects, as in, someone born with a vagina feels like a girl.

**Intersex characteristics** - Someone with intersex characteristics has genitalia and/or chromosomes that don't fit into the typical medical binary of female and male sex.

1.4  MILLION  
FOLKS IN THE  
US  ARE  
TRANSGENDER<sup>1</sup>

# How Do I Know if I'm Transgender — And Am I Normal?

**Being trans is completely normal – and it's nothing new!** For as long as people have existed, people who do not have a mainstream conception of their gender have existed, in many different cultures and places. Figuring out your gender can be difficult or confusing. Many transgender people know from a young age that they don't identify with their sex and/or gender assigned at birth.

You may feel more comfortable expressing yourself, or being known as a gender and/or sex other than the one you were assigned at birth. This might be shown in how you dress, cut your hair, or what name and pronouns you use. You may feel uncomfortable with your body. These are just a few feelings that transgender people experience. Everyone's experience is different. If you think you might be trans, try asking yourself these questions:

- How do I feel when someone uses pronouns, gendered terms to refer to me, like “sir” or “ma’am”?
- Do I feel like my body doesn't match me/how I feel?
- When I was younger, did I like to pretend to be or dress up as a different gender?
- Do I feel like my gender assigned at birth doesn't fit me?

It's okay if you don't have answers for these questions yet, or if your feelings aren't clear yet. Discovering and understanding your gender can take time, and it's normal for it to develop or change over time. Only you will know how to label, identify and express yourself correctly.

**“My community of queer people of color is one of the most important things in my life. The concept of “chosen family” really resonates with me and the people I’m closest to I’ve found through LGBTQ advocacy.”**

**- Ose, 19**



## What is it like being young and Trans?

Young people are paving the way for greater acceptance, less stigma and equal rights. Despite this, transphobia (disliking trans people for being transgender) still exists. It's important to remember that your gender is only one part of you, and everyone has different experiences. Some trans youth may be worried about their friends' or peers' responses. Some might be uncomfortable talking about their gender with family or friends, while others may feel confident. There isn't one right or wrong way to feel about your gender, coming to terms with it, or coming out.

Finding people who will support you in your journey can help make it easier. Social media has enabled young people to connect and find other LGBTQ young people. Finding community may be difficult at first, but it's important to feel connected to and supported by a community that understands you. Many people have blogs or YouTube channels where they talk about their experiences. There may also be groups at your school or on your campus that you can connect with.

**80% of Young People**  
believe laws should protect  
trans people from job  
discrimination<sup>2</sup>



**62% of Young People**  
believe trans people should  
be able to use the bathroom  
that matches their gender<sup>3</sup>





**“If they’re supportive, talk to your friends. Your friends are there to help you, and can be the first ones to use the pronouns you deserve and truly support your identity journey.”**

**- Alex**



## Should I/How Do I Come Out?

Coming out is the process of accepting your gender, figuring out how open you want to be about it, and telling those you want to know. You don't have to come out if you don't want to or before you're ready, or be open about your gender to everyone. If you do choose to come out, it's important to put your safety first. Start by choosing someone you trust, like a close friend, a sibling, parent, or a guidance counselor to confide in. There may be a wide range of reactions and having someone to talk to can help. Some people don't understand what it means to be transgender and it may be hard to know who will listen and be supportive.

Some friends will accept you. Others may turn away from you or tell other people without your permission. Telling family can sometimes be difficult. Some families are highly supportive, and some are not. You may choose to tell everyone or very few people, or somewhere in between. Coming out is very personal – there is no wrong way to do it. **When LGBTQ youth accept themselves, though, most say they feel calmer, happier, and more confident.** Some transgender people transition as well as coming out.

# What's Transitioning?

Transitioning is the process of changing how you are perceived by others so that how you feel, look and are treated all match up. Some trans people may transition socially, legally or medically. Some may only transition socially, while some may not transition at all. The goal of transitioning is to affirm your gender so there is no right or wrong way to transition or to be transgender.

## Someone socially transitioning may:

- Come out as transgender
- Choose to go by a new name
- Change the way they look or dress
- Use different pronouns and ask others to use those pronouns when referring to them.

## Someone legally transitioning may:

Change their legal name and/or sex on documents like their

- Birth certificate
- ID
- Driver's license

## Someone medically transitioning may:

- Get surgery to create or remove the vagina, ovaries, uterus, penis, testes or breasts,
- Take hormones therapy to create a more 'feminine' or 'masculine' look and/or get laser-hair removal.

Medical transitioning can be very expensive and some people may not be able to afford it. Some people just don't want surgery and that is completely normal too. A person does not need to have had surgery to be transgender. People who do have surgery are not more transgender than those who don't have surgery.

Transitioning looks different for everyone. Some transition when they are young, others transition when they're older. Some transition over long periods of time and some transition quicker. Some don't transition at all. Only you can decide what is best for you.

If you chose to transition, similarly to coming out, your safety is most important. Start by choosing someone to confide in. Decide who you want to tell and what steps you might want to take to transition.

Are you interested in surgery or legally changing your name? Do you just want others to see you as your real gender? Different states have different requirements for transitioning, especially if you aren't 18 yet. Some states allow people to identify as 'x', or non-binary, instead of male or female, while others don't. It's important to find out what transitioning is like where you live.

Pronouns are words others use to refer to us. For example, you could say "My sister went to the store" or you could say "She went to the store". Typically 'she/her' are used for women while "he/him" are used for men. Non-binary people may use "they/them". It's important to ask what pronouns someone wants and only to use those.

## So what about my sexuality???

Gender identity is different from sexual orientation. Trans people can be straight, gay, bisexual, asexual or queer just like cisgender/non-transgender people. Only you will know how to label yourself correctly and it's okay for your sexuality to change or develop over time. And, only you know your sexual orientation. You should use whatever term you feel most comfortable with; not what others tell you to. People who don't want to define sexuality based on the idea of two genders may use the term "queer" or "genderqueer."

**"For me personally, it was never a thing where I "came out". I just was out, I started dating the same sex/gender as me and was always just like "this is who I am," accept it or not, but get out of my face either way." -Lara**



## How Can I Have Safer Sex?

Being sexually healthy means deciding what you want and don't want to do with romantic/sexual partners, communicating clearly about your wants and needs, and taking precautions to protect yourself from STI's and unintended pregnancy, if you do decide to have sex.

Oral, anal, and vaginal sex, including sex with toys/dildos, all come with some risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, so it's never a bad idea to practice safer sex and to get tested for STIs regularly.

It's also important to know that if someone with a penis and testicles, and someone with a vagina and uterus have vaginal intercourse, they can become pregnant; condoms and/or birth control are effective in preventing unintended pregnancy. Using a second method like the pill or the IUD can add even more protection from unintended pregnancy.

## What about HIV and STIs?

HIV, human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus that you get from sexual fluids, from blood, or from breast milk of a person who has HIV. If you're having sex, it's a good idea to get tested regularly so you know your HIV status. It's a good health practice to get tested once a year. Knowing your HIV status is crucial to getting the care you need to stay healthy. Talking about your HIV status with partners is important too. That way you can make a plan that helps both of you stay healthy.

For oral or anal sex, condoms and dental dams can provide protection against HIV and STIs. You can also acquire HIV if you share needles for injecting drugs with a person who has HIV. To avoid this way of transmission, either don't inject drugs, or don't share needles. If you think you are likely to be exposed to HIV, for instance by having sex with a partner who is HIV positive, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a pill your doctor can prescribe that can give additional protection from HIV.

It's also important to know about sexually transmitted infections (STIs). These include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, HPV, and herpes. Some are chronic and, all left untreated, can have major impacts on your health. STIs don't always come with symptoms so it's important to ask your health care provider about them and get tested regularly. Condoms or dental dams also provide protection against STIs.

	<b>Oral Sex</b>	<b>Anal Sex</b>	<b>Vaginal Sex</b>
<b>Risks</b>	<b>HIV and STIs</b>	<b>HIV and STIs</b>	<b>HIV, STIs, and Pregnancy</b>
<b>Protection</b>	<b>Condoms, dental dam/Daily use of PrEP</b>	<b>Condoms/ Daily use of PrEP</b>	<b>Condoms/ Birth Control, Daily use of PrEP</b>

## **In a healthy relationship, both partners:**

**Respect one another.**

**Enjoy activities independent of one another, as well as together.**

**Discuss things calmly, allow for differences of opinion, and make compromises.**

**Use each others' preferred name and pronouns. Never use the wrong pronouns or name to intentionally hurt your partner.**

**Trust one another.**

**Respect sexual boundaries and are able to say no to sex.**

**Have room to develop and mature, and value each other through these changes.**

**Embrace each other's differences.**

**Share sexual histories and sexual health status with one another.**

**Respect each other's need for privacy.**

**Approach sex and discussions about sex with the same mutual respect and trust applied to other issues**



## What about healthy relationships?

In unhealthy relationships, one or both partners are controlling, demanding, mean, and/or physically or emotionally abusive. Sometimes it's not so easy to decide if a relationship should be maintained the way it is, worked on, or ended before it goes any further. Partners should examine what is bothering them and what they would like to see change.

Talk over these questions with each other, or with someone you trust, like a friend, teacher, or counselor. Think about what, if anything, you can each do to make the other feel more comfortable in the relationship.

Healthy relationships rely on clear communication. Saying what you mean in a way that others will understand can eliminate many stresses on relationships. **You have a right to leave the relationship if it is not happy and healthy.**



**“Don’t compromise on demanding respect. People often question my trans identity when my gender presentation doesn’t match up with what they assume it’s supposed to be and that can be taxing, but I never let them impact the way I navigate the world...I don’t think it’s anyone’s place to make another person sit in discomfort because of who they are.”**

**- Ose, 19**

## What are my rights?

Everyone has the basic human right to be who they are. No one but you has the right to determine your sexual orientation or how you live.

- Trans people have the right to express their gender through their appearance.
- Trans people have the right to use bathrooms and public facilities that match their gender.
- Trans people have the right to medically transition if they wish to.

But sometimes, especially for young people, laws, school policies, and authorities don't reflect our basic rights. It's a good idea to look up laws and policies in your state and school. If your school isn't supportive, and you're interested in working to change that, visit [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org) to find a community of youth activists who are working for acceptance and legal rights for trans young people.

# Where can I go if I am feeling unsafe or need support?

**Think about supportive adults you know** – is there a friend, neighbor, teacher, or school counselor you can trust?

**Search online.** There may be supportive groups in your area, or online networks which can provide support.

**Check out communities of faith that might be supportive** – many congregations have a mission of acceptance of LGBTQ people.

**Title X clinics** must offer confidential and affordable health care to young people, and many offer counseling services. Find by searching “Title X clinic near me.”

**Check out [AMAZE.org](https://www.amaze.org)**, a fun and informative animated videos about sex, your body, and relationships.



**“Coming out is a long process. I have learned to do it on my own time. My identity is ever-evolving and I have my whole life to come out to the world. My identity is mine.”**

**- Tyunique**

THINK YOU MIGHT BE  
**TRANSGENDER?**

YOU ARE LOVED &  
VALUED AS YOU ARE,  
FOR WHO YOU ARE.



Visit [www.advocatesforyouth.org/ithink](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/ithink) to see the entire I Think I Might Be series:

I Think I Might Be Lesbian

I Think I Might Be Gay

I Think I Might Be Bisexual + Pansexual

I Think I Might Be Asexual

I Think I Might Be Transgender

## ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH'S MISSION:

Advocates for Youth partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information; accessible, confidential, and affordable sexual health services; and the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth.



[www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)



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### Citations:

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