How to Start Talking

about sex, gender identity and expression, and physical and emotional attractions

Talk Early, Talk Often

From the time your child was able to say "girl" and "boy", they were beginning to understand gender and had heard judgments based on differences. Young people develop their gender identities through personal reflection, societal norms, family, and friends. Many conversations about these topics throughout childhood will help give your child a better understanding of themselves and the world.

Assigned Sex is the label of male, female, or intersex given to a person at birth based on external genitalia

Gender Identity is who you know you are along a spectrum includng male, female, both, neither, or somewhere in between

Gender Expression is what you show others and can be masculine, feminine, both, or somewhere in between and is culturally based

Listen Without Judgment

Young people often repeat what they have heard and might say things that you find offensive. Respect your child's curiosity and work to open conversations rather than shutting them down. Share some of your own experiences and calmly explain why you think it is offense or inaccurate. Help your child think of some examples from their experiences. Talk to your child about what they see on television, the internet, and in your neighborhood.

Emotional Attraction is who you are interested in being emotionally close to, confiding in, or sharing thoughts and ideas

Physical Attraction is who you are interested in being physically, romantically, or sexually close with

Consider Your Child's Development

Each child is unique and may develop at a different pace and gender diversity is not a result of illness or parenting style. As puberty begins, some may realize that their gender identity is different from their assigned sex. The average age for discovering physical and emotional attractions is 10. Many children younger than this will express interests in others. Many will not understand this about themselves until much later.

Children do best when their parents or caregivers show them that they are loved and accepted for who they are. Discouraging your child from expressing a gender or attraction can make them feel ashamed. Remember that society's expectations for gender and attractions constantly change and vary in different cultures and at different times in history. Regardless of the gender identity or attractions of your child, you can find opportunities to show your child that transgender, gender-diverse, and people with diverse attractions exist and belong to many communities.

Gender Creative
is when you express your gender differently than societally expected

Gender Fluid
is when you express or identify your gender differently at different times

Two Spirit
is when you have a combination of masculine and feminine charactersitics

Cisgender
is when your assigned sex and gender identity match

Answer Questions Openly and Honestly

If a child is asking a question, you should provide them with an age-appropriate answer. It is important for young people to keep asking questions while trying to understand the complexities of the world. It is okay to admit to your child when you do not know the answer or have all of the information. Sometimes children don't ask questions. Continue to ask questions of your child about their identities, attractions, and feelings about gender and sex.

Start Talking with Books, Films, and Websites

It's Not the Stork by Robie H. Harris
It's Perfectly Normal by Robie H. Harris
It's So Amazing by Robie H. Harris
Who Are You? by Brook Pessin-Whedbee
Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love
Not Quite Narwal by Jessie Sima
Gender Revolution (2017 documentary film)
www.transstudent.org/gender/

Transgender
is when your assigned sex and gender identity do not match

Transsexual
is when your assigned sex and the sex you know you are do not match, often use the term trans