



## Supporting your Child as they Explore their Gender Identity

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Many kids today are exploring their gender identity in a way that did not feel as available to generations past. When a child asks to go by a different name, pronouns, or change their appearance some parents may wonder if this is “just a phase” or a “current trend” and may feel compelled to ignore or dismiss their child’s request. However, your acceptance of your child, including their gender identity, is the most vital indicator of their current and future well-being (Macalli et al., 2020). Research indicates parental acceptance of trans or non-binary youth reduces their risk of suicide, depression, anxiety, and substance use by half compared to the youth of non-accepting parents (Ryan et al., 2010).

If your child has shared that they would like to go by a different name or pronouns, congratulations. You have created a safe space where your child feels they can be honest and authentic with you. It may feel awkward and uncomfortable at first, but using your child chosen name and pronouns is linked to a 71% reduction in depression, 34% reduction in suicidal ideation, and 65% reduction in suicidal behaviors (Russel et al., 2018).

Research shows us that children also feel supported when you openly welcome talk about their trans or non-binary identity, when you require that others in your family respect their name, pronouns, and gender expression and, ask your child how you can support them (Weinhardt et al., 2019). You may not understand their experience, but your willingness to learn will go miles in your relationship with your child.

Many parents experience sadness, grief, anger, guilt, and feelings of isolation when their child comes out to them (Kircher & Ahlijah, 2011). To best support your child, you also deserve support. Seek out spaces where you can share your fears and hesitations with a counselor or other parents of trans and non-binary children.

To meet one-on-one with a MIYFS counselor, call the confidential intake line at 206-275-7657.

