

COLAGE

**PEOPLE WITH
TRANS PARENTS
A RESOURCE GUIDE**

A Note from the PTP Team

Spring 2022

This guide was first created in 2008 to help children and families navigate a parent or caregivers transition. We extend our deepest gratitude to Monica Canfield-Lenfest for creating this guide and establishing the framework for us to continue to support the People with Trans Parents Community.

The People with Trans Parents community is the fastest growing area involving COLAGE's work. The growing visibility and acceptance of trans people has led to an increase of later-in-life transitions, allowing more queerspawn to find each other.

The PTP Team has taken the original guide that was created in 2008 and updated it to align with COLAGE's mission of being the only organization dedicated to the support of children of LGBTQ+ families while holding a strong commitment to social and racial justice values within our community. We have updated some of the language that appeared in the 2008 version that no longer represents us as a community. Language is always evolving and this current version of the guide represents a moment in time.

This guide is dedicated to the strength and resiliency of our parents whose struggle and sacrifice has shaped our lives.

In Solidarity,

Annastasia Martineau

(she/her/hers)

Lila Manley

(she/her/hers)

Olivia Bartholomaei

(she/her/hers)

People with Trans Parents Support Team

Table of Contents

Introduction: A Resource Guide for Us Page 3

The Basics

What Does Transgender Mean? Page 5

Glossary of Terms Page 7

Frequently Asked Questions Page 10

Transition

Finding Out Your Parent is Transgender Page 13

Initial Reactions Page 13

Pronouns Page 15

What We Call Our Parents Page 16

Changes in Gender Expression Page 16

Family Shifts

Divorce and Separation Page 18

Loss and Grieving Page 19

Finding Support and Community Page 19

Coming Out as PTP

Talking About Our Families Page 21

Passing Page 23

Transphobia and You Page 23

Benefits of Being a PTP Page 25

Appendices

- Not So Gay: Differences Between PTPs and Children of LGB/Q Parents
- Transition Tips for Parents
- Transgender Family Resource List

Note to Parents: This guide will be most accessible for people in middle school or older. If your child is younger, we encourage you to read through the guide and provide the information to your child in age-appropriate ways or read the content together so that you can help with any harder vocabulary and answer questions. The [Queerspawn Resource Project](#) has many resources for queerspawn of all ages.

A Resource Guide for Us

“So, your parent is transgender. What's that like?” Does this question sound familiar? As people with transgender parents, we often feel quite alone in our experience. When (and if) we explain that we have a trans parent, we often find most people have never met anyone else with a transgender parent. Have you?

Who is this guide for? Plenty of transgender people have children, but there are only a few resources available for transgender parents and their families. This guide is the first of its kind, a resource specifically created for and by people with transgender parents.

Your parent may have just come out to you as transgender or maybe you have known for years and just found COLAGE. People are transgender in a variety of ways and families relate to each other differently. Maybe your parent is pre-transition, meaning that they intend to transition from one gender to another, but they haven't yet. Or maybe your biological mother is a man, who has been living post-transition as a guy for as long as you can remember. Maybe your parent is nonbinary or genderqueer and neither of the names “mom” or “dad” seems to fit. If you have or had one or more parent who is transgender, non-binary or somewhere else along the gender spectrum, then this guide is for you!

In this guide, we use the term ‘Person with a Trans Parent’ or PTP to describe people with one or more transgender or nonbinary parent or caregiver. See our *Glossary of Terms* for definitions of other words used throughout the guide.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy this resource guide and find it helpful for you and your family. Included is a list of publications, movies, and online resources for further information about having a transgender parent, and transition tips for parents. We would love to hear your thoughts and encourage you to get involved with COLAGE. You can join our newsletter, view a calendar of our events, explore additional resources and connect with us on social media (www.colage.org). Now that you have found COLAGE, you can rest easy knowing that you are not alone!

The Basics

What does transgender mean?

In order to better understand what it means to have a transgender parent, let's start with some basic definitions related to transgender identity and experience. This section provides language for people with transgender parents to use when talking about their families. First, we will explore some basic concepts. Next, review the Glossary for definitions of the words we use throughout this guide. Language is complex and sometimes controversial. If you ask fifteen people for the definition of transgender, you might get fifteen different answers, depending on each person. If you are looking for additional information about transgender parents and their children, check out our *Transgender Family Resource List* of books, movies, and online publications at the end of this guide. Remember that you can also talk to your parent if you have questions. They are probably waiting for you to ask!

Transgender is an umbrella term encompassing people whose gender identity and/or expression does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. When you were born, a doctor assigned you a biological sex - usually either male or female - based on what body parts you have. Some people are also intersex, which means they were born with reproductive or sexual anatomy does not match either male or female. Your biological sex determines your role in the gender binary system, which insists that every person fits into one of two categories: male-assigned and masculine or female-assigned and feminine. It is important to note that biological sex is not as binary as we think it is! We all have different hormone levels, and being intersex is actually just as common as having red hair. Gender normative behavior fits within the rules of the gender binary system. For example, female-assigned people who are feminine would be considered gender normative. There is actually an entire range - or spectrum - of gender options, not just two. When we talk about 'opposite' gender in this guide, we are talking about the opposite *end* of the gender spectrum. We put 'opposite' in quotes to remind you that there are more than two genders.

As you grow up, you learn about the supposedly 'correct' way for a boy/man or girl/woman to behave - your gender role. You also learn to express your own personality and interests, which may or may not fit with gender stereotypes (for example, all boys, and only boys, like to play football). Your gender expression is the way you express your gender through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming. People use many terms to describe gender expression - such as butch (masculine), femme (feminine), androgynous (somewhere in-between masculine and feminine), to name just a few. Your gender expression may or may not fit with societal expectations. It may change from day to day or over time.

Your gender identity is the way that you identify and experience your gender in your heart and mind. When you close your eyes and focus on yourself, do you feel like a woman, a man, or something else? The sense that you have about your true gendered self is your gender identity. It may or may not fit with your current gender expression or your assigned sex.

When your gender identity (how you feel) or your gender expression (how you behave) does not fit with your assigned biological sex, you may be transgender. Not everyone who could fit under the transgender umbrella chooses to identify as transgender, and there are many ways that people may identify. One of the benefits of coming to understand our parents' transgender identities is the deeper awareness of gender for ourselves and others. We can come to understand our own gender identity and expression better as well as become better allies to transgender people of all ages.

Glossary of Terms

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Cisgender | A term used to describe someone who is not trans/non-binary. |
| COLAGEr | A child with one or more LGBTQ+ parent or caregiver that is involved in the COLAGE community. |
| Drag | Performing a different gender role through dress, movement, and grooming for the entertainment of others. |
| FTM | Someone who was assigned female at birth and identifies as male. (female-to-male, trans man, trans masculine) |
| Gender Binary System | An idea and system that insists everyone fits into one of two categories: male-assigned and masculine or female-assigned and feminine. This system gives power to people who follow gender norms at the expense of gender variant and transgender folks (in other words, people who don't). It also puts pressure on boys/men and girls/women to behave according to certain rules regardless of their own circumstances (for example, requiring them to dress or act a certain way). |
| Gender Expression | The way a person expresses their gender identity through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming. |
| Gender identity | A person's internal sense of their gender. or lack thereof. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. |
| Genderqueer | An increasingly popular term used by LGBT people who feel their identities don't easily fit the male/female binary. |
| Gender Role Stereotype | The social expectation of how an individual should act, think, and feel based on upon one's assigned sex. |
| Internalized Oppression | When people who are part of or are connected with an oppressed group feel disgust toward the oppressed part of themselves. |
| MTF | Someone who was assigned as male at birth and identifies as female.(male-to-female, trans woman, trans feminine) |
| PTP | (People with Trans Parents) A person of any age who has (or had) one or more transgender parent(s). |
| Queer | A term used by some LGBT people to describe their identity. Not every LGBT person identifies as queer. It has been and still is used as a derogatory term against LGBT people, but has also been reclaimed as a positive and often political term in recent years. May be used to refer to either sexual orientation and/or gender identity. |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Queerspawn | A term used by some people with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer parent(s) to describe their identity. This term asserts that people with LGBTQ parents are part of the queer community because of their family and/or cultural experience and regardless of their own sexual orientation or gender identity. Not everyone with LGBTQ parents identifies as queerspawn. |
| Sex | The category assigned by a doctor at birth, usually based on external anatomy but also including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. No two people have the same bodies, and sex is not inherently binary. |
| Sexual Orientation | The sex/gender that a person is emotionally and/or physically attracted to over a period of time. |
| Transgender | An umbrella term describing anyone whose gender identity or expression differs from their biological sex. |
| Transition | The process of aligning one's body (and gender expression) with one's gender identity. Transition sometimes involves medical treatment and sometimes does not involve medical treatment. |
| Transphobia | The mistreatment, discrimination, and oppression faced specifically by transgender people. |

Terms to Avoid

Some of the terms you may hear in reference to trans/nonbinary people are outdated. While trans/nonbinary people may choose to reclaim these terms, they are not for allies to use.

- ⊘ Transsexual
- ⊘ Preferred pronouns
(just asking "what are your pronouns" works best!)
- ⊘ Transvestite
- ⊘ A "transgender" (using the word as a noun)
- ⊘ Crossdresser

Frequently Asked Questions

There is a fair amount of information out there for transgender people, telling them how to find support, understand their identity, and make necessary changes. For PTP, learning more about transgender people is a great way to better understand your parent. The question most of us have, though, is 'How does this affect me?' We explore the many answers to this question throughout this guide. Of course, the answers depend on each individual family, but here are some frequently asked questions:

How will my relationship with my parent change when they transition? Will I still have a mother or father after the transition? Some parts of your relationship may change as your parent transitions. The most important thing to remember is that they are still your parent, regardless of their gender identity and expression. If there are certain activities you really like to do with your parent (such as playing sports or cooking together), let them know that you'd still like to do these things together. That way, you can continue to build and grow your relationship together. Keep reading for more tips in the *Transition* section.

What do I call my parent now? The answer to this question varies from family to family. Your parent may change their name and pronouns (for example, he/his to she/her or they/them). Switching pronouns often takes practice, but once you get used to using their preferred pronouns, it gets a lot easier. Some people continue to call their parent Mom or Dad, while some others use the "opposite" parental term. Some families create new language to acknowledge their trans parent. You can have a conversation with your parent about what you will call them now to come up with a familiar name that feels comfortable for both of you (such as Da instead of Dad). See the *Pronouns* and *What We Call Our Parents* sections for more examples and ideas.

Will my parents divorce or separate because of this? Again, it depends on your family. Some people stay together when one person transitions, while others decide to separate. Your parents can both continue to love and support you, even if their relationship to one another changes. The best way to figure out what will happen in your family is to talk with your parents. Read more about the changes that many families experience in the *Family Shifts* section of this guide.

Is my parent going to have surgery? This is a big question for many people, since the idea of a parent having any kind of surgery can be pretty scary. The answer depends on your parent. People transition in different ways, and some don't medically transition at all.

Sometimes transitioning involves medical treatment, which could include taking hormones, electrolysis (hair removal), and/or surgery. There are different kinds of surgeries, and your parent may elect to have one, more than one, or none. The purpose of

these treatments is to make your parent's body express their gender identity more completely. If other people ask you whether your parent has had 'the surgery', make sure your parent is okay with you discussing this personal aspect of their life. It is okay to remind others how weird it is to discuss parents' body parts.

Not all transgender people undergo medical treatment, and people have different types of treatment. Having surgery (or not) does not determine someone's gender identity, and medical treatment is a private matter -- it's no one else's business. See the *Talking About Our Families* section for tips on addressing other people's questions.

So, my parent might not undergo medical treatment? – Yes. Many transgender people do not seek medical treatment for a variety of reasons. Ultimately, it is up to the person to decide if they wish to seek gender affirming surgery.

Other transgender folks may decide not to go through medical treatments for a variety of reasons. Many of the treatments are expensive and not all people can afford them. Someone may have religious, health-related, or other reasons to not alter their bodies. Other folks feel comfortable with the physical body they have, even though they want to express their gender in different ways.

Why would my parent decide to have kids if they knew they would transition? They probably didn't know that they would transition. Even if they did have the desire to transition, they may not have had the opportunity to do so. The world has changed a lot over the last few decades and transgender people have more options than ever before. People usually decide to have children because they love kids and want to be a parent. Transgender people are no exception.

Does this mean my parent is gay/lesbian? Not necessarily. Sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, etc) is different from gender identity. Just like everyone else, transgender people may be attracted to people of just one sex/gender or multiple genders and may identify as gay, lesbian, straight, or bisexual (or none of the above!). Your parent's sexual orientation may change as their gender identity changes (for example, a trans man who is attracted to women and identified as a lesbian before transition may identify as a straight man after transition.)

If my parent is transgender does that mean I will become transgender or gay? The gender identity of your parent is very unlikely to determine your gender identity or sexual orientation. Transgender people often are aware from a very young age that they don't quite fit into the gender role assigned to them or they don't feel comfortable in their body. Plenty of straight, gender normative parents raise transgender people, so it follows that transgender parents often raise straight, gender normative kids.

Remember, everyone has a gender identity and you may be more aware of your gender, since you have learned about transgender identity from your parent. COLAGE finds that many people with LGBTQ parents question their sexual orientation or gender identity at some point in their lives. Partly because other people often ask us about how we identify and partly because we might be more curious about the possibilities of different sexual orientations and genders.

Questioning your gender doesn't mean that you are necessarily transgender or queer. There are lots of stereotypes about how boys and girls should act. It's okay to explore whatever clothes, activities, and interests you enjoy. Remember, even if you do end up identifying as LGBTQ+ it will be because that is what is right for you, NOT because of the influence of your parent.

My parent already transitioned or my parent isn't going to transition. Is this guide for me? Of course! This guide is for anyone who has (or had) one or more transgender parent(s). Your parent may have transitioned before you can remember or when you were much younger. Maybe your parent is genderqueer or for a variety of other reasons, has chosen not to transition.

There are many elements to having a transgender parent and transition is one of them, which we explore at length in the next few pages. Hopefully, future versions of this guide will encompass a wider range of experience, as the PTP community continues to grow and find its voice. If you aren't currently experiencing a parent's transition, you may find the following sections most relevant: *The Basics*, *Coming Out as PTP*, *Finding Support*, and our *Transgender Family Resource List*.

The next section of this resource guide explores the many ways a parent's transition impacts their children.

Transition

While not everyone's parent transitions and some people's parents have already transitioned, we know that dealing with a parent's transition is one of the biggest challenges of having a transgender parent. Let's look at some of the major aspects of a parent's transition and the experiences of other PTP.

See *Transition Tips for Parents* for ways that transgender parents (and their partners/spouses) can help their children navigate the transition process.

Finding Out Your Parent is Transgender

We discover that our parents are transgender in a variety of ways. Some families sit down for a family meeting and announce that a parent plans to transition. Other PTP find out accidentally, by stumbling upon pictures or clothing. Let's explore some of the ways that PTP find out that their parent is transgender.

Parents come out to their children in different ways, some of which are easier to handle than others. You may have wondered why they didn't tell you earlier or what it means for your relationship. This was the beginning of an ongoing conversation, so be sure to ask questions as they arise. Remember that you can ask for as little or as much information as you are comfortable learning.

Some people find out about their parent's transgender identity without being told. Some PTP discover their parents dressed in different clothing than they would usually wear. Others have discovered pictures of their parent presenting in another gender. If this was your experience, you may have felt angry or confused that a secret was kept from you and that you had to find out on your own rather than having a conversation. Although you found out accidentally, you can still ask as many or as few questions as you need. Know that your parent(s) did not intend to hurt you by keeping it a secret. It may be a good time to seek additional support, such as a therapist or PTP COLAGE group. Check out the *Finding Support and Community* section later in this guide.

Initial Reactions

So, how did you react when your parent told you they were transgender? Depending on the relationships within the family, the way a parent comes out, and your own process, PTP react differently. You may be angry, scared, sad, confused, relieved, curious - all of these feelings are natural and okay. Perhaps you feel compelled to ask a lot of questions or you have almost no immediate reaction. If you have sibling(s), you may have an entirely different reaction than they do. People process new information differently and you may have questions or feel differently in the weeks, months, or years after your parent comes out. Your reaction can depend on *how* you found out and also *when* you found out. Young

children tend to adjust to change easier and might understand a parent's transition in simpler terms than older children.

Older youth have learned more about gender roles and what is 'normal', so it can be a lot harder to handle the news. They are also navigating their own social worlds, in which having a 'different' family can be a real challenge. Even PTP whose parents transitioned when they were younger often feel pressure to be 'normal' during adolescence and may struggle with their parent's identity.

Some teenagers ask, "Why can't you wait until I'm out of the house?" Many transgender parents would rather postpone their transition until their children have grown up. The reality is, if your parent is coming out to you, they really need to deal with their transgender identity now.

Adults whose parents transition later in life may have more ingrained expectations from what they had assumed their parent's gender to be, so it may take some time to adjust to a parent's new identity.

Regardless of your initial reaction, remember that your parent's gender identity is not based on anything you did. People transition in different ways, so be sure to ask your parent what you can expect. For instance, is your parent going to change their name or pronouns? Will they be changing their appearance? Is it okay for you to talk to people about this? Continue to have conversations with your parents throughout the transition. It can really help. Also, if you don't feel comfortable knowing certain things, it's okay to ask your parent not to talk about something.

So, let's look at some of the things to expect as your parent transitions...

Pronouns

Your parent may ask you to start using different pronouns. They may use feminine pronouns, (she/her) masculine pronouns, (he/his) pronouns or gender neutral pronouns (they/them). Some people prefer gender neutral pronouns, such as they/them, ze (pronounced zee and used instead of he or she) and hir (pronounced here and used instead of his or her). These pronouns reflect your parent's gender identity and/or expression. You may feel as though it is challenging to begin using different pronouns, but it is important to remember that using someone's pronouns is how we show them that we care about and respect them. You may forget and use the old pronouns, or you may be resistant to using new pronouns. Be gentle with yourself and keep in mind that this does get easier with practice.

One of the simplest ways to affirm a person's gender identity is to use their pronouns and name. This, of course, is often easier said than done. Try not to assume that you know someone's gender identity or correct pronoun. If you meet someone and you aren't sure of their pronouns, politely ask them "What are your pronouns?" It may take some practice, but you should always use someone's correct pronouns. This is a matter of respecting someone's right to self-identify and will make you a better ally to transgender and nonbinary people (not just your parent).

If you want some extra pronoun practice, you can try this exercise:

Pronoun Practice

Materials: Picture of your parent, index cards (or scrap paper), marker

On the index card, write the following:

"This is my parent, _____ (insert your parent's name). _____ (write your parent's pronoun – "she, he, or they") loves me very much. _____ (write the pronoun – "her, his, or them") eyes are _____ (insert color)."

Practice using your parent's pronoun. Describe where they were when the picture was taken. If you mistakenly use the old pronoun or name, you can refer to the pronouns and name written on the card. Be gentle with yourself. This process often takes time and patience.

What We Call Our Parents

We learn from society that mothers are women and fathers are men, but we also know from personal experience that this is not always true. So, when your mom becomes a man, what do you call him? Do you call him Mom? Some people do. Do you call him Dad? Maybe. Perhaps you decide to call him by a new familiar name. There are many options and it helps if you and your parent make the decision together. You can have a conversation with your parent about what you are comfortable calling them and how they want to be addressed. Come to a compromise on a name that feels good for both of you. The name you decide on at first may even change over time as you and your transitioning parent both become more comfortable with the new situation.

Your parent may change their name to a name that suits their gender identity, so when you talk about them to other people, try to be aware of their new name. Just like pronouns, using a trans person's chosen name is a simple and important way to acknowledge their gender identity.

Changes in Gender Expression

As your parent transitions, their appearance may change to fit with their gender identity. They may start to dress differently or participate in new activities. Depending on how differently your parent has been presenting, this may feel strange. For example, if you have never seen your father in a dress or skirt and they start to wear skirts, it may take some adjustment. Part of this is simply adjusting to a loved one's new appearance, but there are probably other issues involved. Everybody receives a lot of messages about the way men and women should look and act. We discuss this more in the *Transphobia and You* section.

It can feel strange when our parent's appearance contradicts society's rules. For example, if you see your father in a skirt and it makes you feel uncomfortable, think about all of the reasons why you may feel uncomfortable. Acknowledge them and allow yourself to think about the positive aspects, too. The more honest you are about how you are feeling about the transition, the easier it will be. If you feel comfortable, you might ask your parent how it feels for them to be wearing the clothes. If you can understand that your parent feels safe, comfortable and happy in their clothing it may help you embrace their new fashion more.

Perhaps your parent's attire hasn't changed much since they came out to you. Maybe your mom has always been butch and worn more masculine clothing. If you think about it, many women can wear pants without any assumption about their gender identity. Whereas, the rules for men are a lot stricter when it comes to clothing, and if a man wears a dress, he is often met with confusion if not hostility. Keep in mind that we all learn what is

and is not socially acceptable, which we have to reconcile with our parent's changing appearance.

As your parent's appearance shifts, it's important to keep communication lines open. Talk about different situations that may come up and how you will handle them. You can role play different scenarios with your parent to figure out what feels most comfortable for both of you. For example, if you are in public with your parent and you see a friend from school, how will you introduce your parent? Figure these things out ahead of time, so you don't get caught by surprise.

Family Shifts

As your parent transitions, your family dynamics can shift - your parents may split up and your family could look different as your parent's gender role changes. If your parents stay together after one parent transitions, your two moms will look more like a straight couple or your mom and dad will look like a gay couple. Sometimes, PTP lose contact with extended family members who choose not to continue a relationship with their parent(s). Remember that feelings are always okay. If you are feeling angry, sad, confused, you can express these feelings.

Divorce and Separation

PTP may experience a divorce or separation of their parents during their life. After a parent comes out as transgender, some people's parents do decide to stay together, even if their relationship changes. The transition of one parent may change or end the relationship between your parents. We also recognize that parents decide to split up for many different reasons, which could have little to do with your parent's transgender identity and could happen years after (or before) their transition. Your parents may have divorced long before your parent came out, and your parent's disclosure may bring some new challenges or shed light on some old issues. Divorce is never easy and, although the decision to split up is made by parents, it deeply impacts the lives of the children.

It can take people a long time to figure out their gender identity, regardless of their sexual orientation. Some trans people have identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual prior to deciding to transition. Sometimes, relationships end when one person transitions. Many straight-identified trans people choose to marry and have children prior to transitioning. Some people think that fulfilling the expectation for their gender role - such as becoming a husband and father - may 'cure' them of not feeling quite right in their body. Maybe they still were not happy and finally came to terms with their gender identity. Transition is a major process for everyone involved, especially the spouses/partners of the transitioning parent. Depending on a number of factors, your parents may decide to split up when one parent transitions.

Just like with your parent's transition, you have the right to as much or as little information about your parents' divorce or separation. There is often a lot of emotion involved in a break-up, and your parents may express anger toward one another to you. It is not your responsibility to take sides or take care of either of your parents' needs. You are the child in this situation, even if your experience has made you feel more grown up. Remember to ask for what you need - access to or space from either parent, access to support (such as a therapist, caring adult, or community), time to process your own feelings, or anything else that will help you during this time.

Loss and Grieving

As your parent transitions, their appearance, mannerisms, and temperament will probably change. As a parent's gender role – woman or man – transforms their parental role – mother or father – many PTP experience a loss of the person their parent used to be. In her memoir *Dress Codes: Of Three Girlhoods – My Mother's, My Father's and Mine*, Noelle Howey talks about grieving for a persona, for the man her father was before becoming the woman that she needed to be. While this person is still your parent and is often more a whole person than they had been, we all are taught to expect and value certain behaviors from certain people, especially from our parents. When expectations are not met, we may be disappointed.

Gender-specific holidays (such as Mother's Day or Father's Day) and events can be particularly challenging. You may miss buying your dad a tie for Father's Day or feel upset that your mom will attend your wedding wearing a suit and tie. Maybe your bar mitzvah is coming up and you are trying to determine your female father's role in the ceremony. If everyone expects a mom to be a woman and a dad to be a man, it can feel strange to no longer have a male-identified father or a female-identified mother.

Allow yourself to grieve the loss of your parent's prior identity if it makes sense for you. Not everyone experiences their parent's transition in the same way, and some people feel a loss more deeply than others. The silver lining is that you have the opportunity to witness your parent as they transform into their true self. You may even discover new aspects of your relationship that you never imagined.

Finding Support and Community

Having a transgender parent is not always easy, as we've already discussed in previous sections. Sometimes, you may want to find someone to talk to about your thoughts and feelings. You can ask your parent to help identify another adult, such as a family friend, godparent, or other knowledgeable and reliable person who can help you sort through your feelings and come to terms with your parent's transition, separation, or other issues you want to discuss.

A good therapist can be a great asset to help you process the changes to your family. So, how do you find a good therapist?

You can look online for LGBT-friendly helping professionals, through organizations such as WPATH or the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. If you have one, you can also check with your local LGBT community center. If you are in a more conservative and/or rural area, your best option may be a therapist in the nearest large city or college town. If there is a nearby university or other community service center, they may be able to make

appropriate referrals. You can also search the internet for "transgender," the name of your state, and therapy (e.g. Transgender Michigan Therapy).

Keep in mind that a personal referral is usually the most reliable source, especially if someone who knows you can refer a therapist they know well. Ideally, your therapist has experience working with transgender people and/or issues around gender expression and identity. Realistically, however, few therapists have experience working both with transgender people and families. Seek out a therapist with a good reputation who understands issues of family diversity and family systems. The best way to find a good fit for you is to talk to the therapist – ask if they are familiar with and/or comfortable with transgender issues. Your therapist may have little experience with transgender issues, but they should be committed to supporting you and learning more. Remember, it is not your responsibility to educate your therapist about transgender issues. There are resources available for them – such as *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-Variant People and their Families*, by Arlene Istar Lev, or *Transition and Beyond*, by Reid Vanderburgh. See our *Transgender Family Resource List* in the back of this guide for other books, movies, and publications related to transgender families.

It can take some time and effort to find a therapist that fits with you. If you meet with a therapist and they seem judgmental or too focused on your parent's gender identity, this is a red flag. A good therapist will be respectful of your parent's gender identity and not try to blame all of your concerns on your trans parent. They should also be sensitive to your experience, acknowledging the impact that your parent's transgender identity has made in your life. Trust your instincts -- does this person seem to be in tune with your feelings? If not, you should look for a therapist who can provide what you need.

Beyond finding a good therapist, you can also read books or watch movies about transgender people and PTP - see the resource list at the end of this guide. If your school has a GSA (gay straight alliance), that may be a safe space to find community and support. You can access COLAGE community through our social medias (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Discord) where upcoming PTP virtual meetups will be posted or our annual [Family Week](#) in Provincetown, MA with hundreds of other queerspawns from all different family structures. As people with transgender parents, we can learn from each other, support each other, and feel empowered in the knowledge that we are not alone.

Coming out as PTP

Talking About Our Families

As the children of transgender parents, we are often challenged to explain our families to other people. You may have to explain why your mother has a beard or that the other woman who picks you up from school is your father. School can provide some unique challenges.

Sometimes we need to keep things about our families private, especially if our parent is not out as transgender. If your parent is undergoing transition, people may ask you questions about your parent and you can choose how to answer. Remember, you can always choose not to answer people's questions. Your family should have a conversation about how visible your parent wants to be with their transgender identity. Like we said before, this is a transition for everyone, and it's important that everyone feels like they are heard.

Just as our parents choose when to come out about their transgender identity, you now have the choice of when or whether to be out about your family. Remember, this is your decision to make. Talk to your parent about how out they want to be in your community and let them know how out you want them to be. If you feel uncomfortable with your parent picking you up from school presenting their new gender expression, tell them. It may be hard for a transitioning parent to hear, so you may want to ask another adult to help you have this conversation. Not all of our parents want to be out, so it's a good idea to check in with them about whether it's okay to be out to friends, neighbors, or teachers. This can also be difficult if you want to be able to get support by talking to your friends about the transition and your parent prefers to be closeted. Try to find compromises as a family so that all of you can feel safe and supported.

Coming out can be quite liberating and also pretty scary. Do you have a good friend who you trust with your feelings and private issues? You can have a direct conversation with them or invite them to meet your parent. Look for supportive allies, such as teachers or other supportive adults. If your school has a GSA (gender and sexuality alliance), you can often find support by joining that type of group. They can be there for you if other people have negative reactions to your parent's transgender identity. You can also find support through COLAGE - we have email discussion lists and resources for people with LGBTQ parents.

Whether or not you are out about your parent, sometimes it can feel like there is a lot of attention on your parent's transgender identity. There are so many aspects to each of us - personality, interests, talents, and more. Your parents influence some parts of you, but everything about you is not determined exclusively by them. You will continue to learn,

grow, and develop your own identity. While people may be really focused on your parent's identity, you can remind them that you are your own person, an individual with a unique set of experiences and interests.

Passing

Some of our parents pass in society, meaning that people view them as their preferred gender and do not think that they are transgender. Many transgender people decide to be "stealth", meaning that people do not know that they are trans. Calling a transwoman "Dad" in public can effectively out your parent as transgender. Some PTP have to keep their parent's transgender identity private in order to protect the family. So, how do you explain your relationship with your parent? PTP may refer to their parent as their uncle or aunt, or as a step-parent.

If your parents stay together, people will probably see them differently than they used to. Maybe you used to have two moms and one of your parents transitioned from female to male. Now, your parents appear as a straight couple in public. They may be treated with heterosexual privilege that they didn't have when people saw them as a lesbian couple. On the other hand, maybe your parents were in a straight marriage and your father transitioned from male to female. Now, your parents are seen as a lesbian couple and may experience homophobia. The way that people perceive of our parents, whether they are single or in a relationship, makes a big impact in the way that they are treated in society.

Sometimes, our parents ask us to keep their transgender identity private. It may feel challenging to keep information private. Talk to your parents about who you can talk to about their identity. Having a transgender parent can feel really lonely and not being able to talk about it can be hard. Even if you can't be out in your community, you can find community online through COLAGE. Join our PTP email list to find other people with transgender parents who you can talk to about your family.

Transphobia and You

When you first found out that your parent was trans or saw them present in their chosen gender, did you feel uncomfortable or confused? If you did, you aren't the only one who has felt this way. Some of us respond to our transgender parent in a negative way.

Acknowledge your feelings without judgment and know that many feelings are natural responses to situations. It's okay to think, "I wish my parent wasn't transgender". There are probably a lot of complicated reasons why you feel this way. Just because you have these feelings doesn't mean you hate your parent. Rather than being overcome by the fear and guilt, you can move through these feelings to a place of acceptance. Knowing that you aren't the only one who has felt this way is a good first step.

Now let's examine where these feelings could have come from. Take a look around at the society and community in which you live. What messages are you receiving about gender? We live in a society that enforces certain ideas of acceptable gender presentation. Just like other people, we learn 'normal' ways of being male or female and are rewarded when we fit into these categories. We are taught that a mother is a woman and a father is a man, that a man in a dress is some kind of joke and a woman with a beard belongs in the circus. Our trans parents' identities directly conflict with these messages.

Transphobia is the mistreatment, discrimination, and oppression faced specifically by transgender people. Transphobia, like homophobia and gender-based discrimination, affects our families and our lives in a number of ways. Because our society tends to recognize only two narrowly- defined options for gender identity – masculine man or feminine woman – those who fit within those categories are rewarded. Unfortunately, many people are afraid of and/or hostile toward people who do not fit into these gender roles. People treat men and women differently, so when they can't determine someone's gender, or when they think someone is violating the "rules" about gender, they don't know how to interact with them. Sometimes, this confusion leads to harassment or violence. Transphobia is a real threat to our families. When our parents are not safe, we are not safe. We depend on our parents to love us and provide for us. If they are unable to secure a job, be safe from violence, or be themselves, that impacts us as their children.

Beyond the threats to our parents, we also encounter transphobia in our daily lives. Classmates, teachers, or community members may do or say inappropriate things related to or about our trans parent. It's important to have allies in these situations who support us and our families. They can help us stand up against transphobia. Check out the *Coming Out as PTP section* as well as COLAGE's online resources for more about coming out at school and in your community.

We live in a society that punishes people for being transgender. By participating in the culture, we are constantly bombarded by negative messages about people who don't fit into the "normal" gender roles. Some of these messages seep into our own ideas about the way the world is and the way that people should act. Many of the negative feelings about our transgender parent are tied to the transphobia that we have internalized within ourselves. There are many forms of **internalized oppression** – when people who are part of or are connected with an oppressed group feel disgust toward the oppressed part of themselves. As people with transgender parents, we may find ourselves thinking negatively about transgender people or we may police our own gender expression to fit certain cultural expectations.

The good news is that we can move through our internalized transphobia to find the value in ourselves and our family experiences. Try this exercise for sorting through your feelings,

recognizing which pieces are connected to your interpersonal relationship with your parent, the dynamics of your family, and your own internalized transphobia. Being honest with ourselves can feel really scary. As you go through these questions, be gentle with yourself and give yourself credit for going through the process.

Exercise:

Think about a time when you felt uncomfortable about your parent's gender presentation/identity.

Now ask yourself: Why am I feeling uncomfortable? Take that answer and ask, why? Keep asking why - until you get a deeper understanding of your feelings. Anytime you have these sorts of negative thoughts, practice asking these questions. Eventually, you will be able to recognize the root of certain thoughts or feelings you may have.

Okay. Take a deep breath and give yourself a pat on the back. Thinking about these things is not easy. Remember that it is always okay to feel your feelings. You may be upset with your parent(s) for reasons beyond their transgender identity. Some people are better parents than others - transgender people are no exception. Being transgender does not inherently make someone a better or worse parent. Since we live in a transphobic society that already judges our parents, acknowledging the hard parts of our family relationships can be really challenging. Maybe your parent hasn't always been there for you or their coming out has led to a divorce or separation. Sometimes, it helps to have someone besides your parents to talk through these things, like a friend, therapist or other caring adult (See the *Finding Support and Community* section for tips). Remember to ask for what you need and be honest with yourself.

By acknowledging the impact of transphobia in our own lives, we can improve our relationships with our transgender parents and be empowered as witnesses and participants in transgender lives - we can become allies to transgender people and heal ourselves from this form of oppression.

Benefits of Being a PTP

Among people with transgender parents (as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer parents), most people consider the greatest value of this experience to be our open mindedness. Since we live in a society that sends us negative messages about many groups of people, including our parents, rejecting the negative messages we have heard

about our parents or families often causes us to reject the negative messages we may have heard about other groups of people as well. If my parent is oppressed for being transgender, I can empathize with other people who are oppressed for their identities or appearance, and I don't want to participate in making other people feel the way my parent and I have sometimes been made to feel. We are all subject to multiple systems of privilege and oppression - including racism, classism, ableism, etc - which impact our understanding of the world. Simply having a transgender parent does not mean that I automatically understand someone else's experience of racism or some other form of oppression or discrimination. I can, however, utilize my perspective as a PTP to examine the many ways that oppression and privilege impact people's lives.

In addition to being open-minded, many PTP find the strength in themselves to 'overcome anything'. A parent's transition is a life-altering event, and moving forward can provide an enormous sense of pride and strength. Some of us even find pride in a stronger relationship with our parent. Many PTP describe only knowing 'half' of their parent until the parent transitions and they find a whole, loving person who is better able to be a parent. We can rejoice in knowing a healthier, happier version of our parent.

Learning about transgender identity and issues may also open us up to exploring how our own behaviors have been shaped by society's expectations for us based on gender. When people try to tell us that we can't do (or must do) certain things because we're a boy, girl, man, or woman, we know that these are stereotypes that may or may not hold true for our lives.

Thank you for reading the PTP Resource Guide. To connect with the People with Trans Parents program, find PTP community, and get involved please contact ptpsupport@colage.org.

The following section includes handouts to provide additional resources to families with trans parents. *Transition Tips for Parents* includes some useful information for transitioning parents. The *Transgender Family Resource List* provides you with the many books, movies, publications, and online resources about transgender parents and their children. Finally, our resource *Not So Gay: Differences Between PTPs and People with LGB/Q Parents* highlights some of the unique aspects of having a transgender parent, to help you and those around you better understand your experience.


 The logo for COLAGE, where each letter is a different color: C (purple), O (pink), L (yellow), A (orange), G (green), and E (teal).

Not So Gay: Differences between PTPs and


 The logo for COLAGE, where each letter is a different color: C (purple), O (pink), L (yellow), A (orange), G (green), and E (teal).

Children with LGB/Q parents

People with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parents share many similarities and differences. Our families are unique, but we find a certain commonality in our experiences. People with transgender parents have a lot in common with people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer parents. There are, however, some specific aspects of having a transgender parent that other COLAGErs do not experience. It is important for us to acknowledge the distinct experiences of certain segments of our community in order to better understand each other and celebrate the diversity of all queerspawn.

Sexual orientation vs. Gender identity. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer identity is based on sexual orientation, or the gender that someone is attracted to. Everyone has a sexual orientation. Transgender identity is based on gender identity, or one's own understanding of being a man, a woman, or another gender. Everyone has a gender identity. A person's gender identity is almost always visible (even if their gender identity is sometimes or often misinterpreted by others), but a person's sexual orientation is not always visible. Whereas sexual orientation affects a parent's relationship to potential partners, a parent's gender identity impacts how they relate to the world at large. A parent's sexual orientation and a parent's gender identity thus impact their children in different ways.

Societal Awareness and Acceptance. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer people have made incredible progress over the last few decades in increasing visibility and acceptance in society. Transgender people have also made progress, but have been less visible and less accepted than gay and lesbian people. While transgender people are becoming more visible, the fact that they have children is less widely known. In contrast, most Americans are aware that gay and lesbian people may have children. Visibility for our families can also be challenging within the LGBTQ community - for example, a family of two women and two children is easily read as a queer family whereas transgender parents might be read as (or identify as) straight, sometimes complicating our access to LGBTQ community.

Legal Protections. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer people have more legal protections than transgender people. Many states have anti-discrimination and hate crimes laws regarding sexual orientation, but not gender identity and expression. Depending on the state, transgender parents can also face immense challenges in court custody cases, leaving children vulnerable to being taken away from or legally estranged from a parent.

Transition. Many people with transgender parents witness their parent's transition from one gender to another. A parent may change their pronouns, name, appearance, and mannerisms during the transition. This may be a major challenge for PTPs, who go through a transition of their own in relation to their transitioning parent. As we witness our parent change their gender, we may grieve the loss of our parent's former self. We struggle with understanding and/or re-establishing our relationship to our parent as they become who they need to be. There are also assumptions about surgeries, hormones and other medical states of transgender people. As PTPs, we are often forced to hear or

answer invasive questions about the medical processes, genitalia or other details about our parents.

Pronouns and Naming. We are taught that mothers are women and fathers are men. Having a transgender parent challenges this assumption. PTPs may call their mother ‘he’ or their father ‘she’. Adjusting to new pronouns takes practice, so when a parent transitions, switching pronouns can be a big challenge. Some parents change their name, as well, to reflect their new identity. A parent who transitions from female to male may no longer want to be called “Mom” in public. Children often relearn how to refer to their transgender parent in ways that feel comfortable for both the parent and the child.

Transphobia in the LGBTQ Community. As people with transgender parents, PTPs often encounter transphobia in the world. Sometimes, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer people are transphobic toward our families or other transgender people. Just because someone is LGBTQ (or has an LGB/Q parent) does not necessarily mean that they understand transgender issues. Even in gay-friendly spaces, we may hear negative comments about drag queens or other trans folks. You can respond to these comments by reminding people that many LGBTQ people are often targeted for their gender expression, which is the basis of discrimination against transgender people, too.

This resource was developed by:

COLAGE

www.colage.org

A Legal Q & A for People with Transgender Parents

1. **Who is a parent?** A parent is a person who provides love and support and takes care of the daily and long-term needs of a child. A parent supports a child in all ways, including through education, health care, and discipline. There are many ways to be a parent, some that are recognized under the law and some that are not. A parent can be someone who is genetically related to a child, someone who gave birth to a child,

COLAGE

someone who agreed to build a family through assisted reproduction or surrogacy, or someone who stepped up to function as a parent (sometimes called a de facto parent). Some parents are married, and many are unmarried. Some people are single parents by choice, and some people choose to build a family with more than two parents. Every parent and every family is different and unique.

The legal definition of who a parent is – what is called parentage – does not always match the practical reality of a child’s life and who a child considers to be their parent. Legal definitions of parent are based on state laws which can be different based on where you live. Some states only recognize as a legal parent persons who are related to a child by genetics, marriage, or adoption. An increasing number of states recognize “de facto” or “psychological” parents, persons who have formed a parent-like bond with a child or functionally served as a parent. However, not all states have done so; there is usually a very high standard set for individuals to meet the definition, and the status does not always come with the full range of legal rights available to legal parents.

2. **How does being transgender affect a person’s parentage?** Many transgender people are parents and being transgender should not have an effect on legal parentage. Because of ongoing societal discrimination against transgender people, transgender people can experience discrimination in courts during custody disputes over children. It is important for transgender people to get good legal advice and to take actions to secure their legal parentage of their children as close to birth as possible. Legal resources for transgender parents are listed at the end of this FAQ.

3. **How does a person become a legal parent to a child?** Depending on what state you live in, there are many ways to establish a legal parent-child relationship. Here are some of the paths to parentage:
 - Adoption
 - Acknowledgment of Parentage (currently 10 states allow greater access to parentage by signing an AOP form, including parents through assisted reproduction) [1]
 - Court adjudication
 - De facto parent adjudication
 - Genetic connection (unless someone is a sperm or egg donor)
 - Giving birth
 - Marriage (children born into a marriage are presumed children of both parents)
 - Surrogacy agreement
 - Regardless of the path to parentage, a parent usually needs evidence of legal parentage – either a court decree of parentage or adoption or an acknowledgment of parentage form – to be fully protected in the state they live in and in other jurisdictions. To make sure you are taking the right steps to protect your parent-child relationship, it’s a good idea to consult a local lawyer.

4. **What is custody and parenting time?** When the relationship between parents breaks down, courts often get involved in dealing with questions about how decisions will be made that involve children, and how parents will share time with their children. This is

true both for marital families going through a divorce and for non-marital families where the parents cannot agree on parenting responsibilities and benefits.

Custody is a term that typically refers either to with whom the child will live (physical custody) or who will have authority for making major decisions regarding a child's medical care, education, religious upbringing, and other decisions (legal custody). Parenting time, sometimes called visitation, refers to the time a non-custodial parent will be able to spend with a child. Some states have gotten rid of the language of custody and visitation altogether and use parental rights and responsibilities instead.

There are many different custody and parenting time situations. The goal of a family's custody and parenting plan should be the best interests of the child, and an appropriate plan usually ensures that a child can maintain a relationship with both or all of their parents.

- 5. How does being transgender affect a determination of custody or parenting time during divorce or dissolution of the parents' relationship?** Being transgender should not affect a court's determination of a parent's custody or parenting time in a break-up. Whether someone is transgender does not impact their ability to parent their child. Unfortunately, bias and prejudice does exist in our society. Some courts have put restrictions on transgender parents that are unfair. GLAD and other legal organizations like the National Center for Lesbian Rights can provide referrals and resources to transgender parents who may experience discrimination in family courts.

More typically, we know that parents do not always act in the best interests of their children when they are going through a break-up and can be very high conflict. Sometimes because they feel both scared and desperate, a non-transgender parent may try to appeal to prejudice and bias to argue that a transgender parent should not get custody or should have restricted visitation. We have heard of non-transgender parents arguing that having a relationship with a transgender parent may be confusing, disturbing, or stigmatizing to a child.

We know that many of these arguments unfortunately sometimes resonate with judges who may not know much or anything about transgender people. For this reason, we strongly encourage any transgender person going through a contested court proceeding to reach out for legal support and resources.

It may also be worthwhile to independently provide a court with information about what it means to be transgender and the fact that being a transgender parent has no adverse impact on children. Fostering a healthy relationship with both parents through any emotionally difficult time (and beyond) is important for all children, regardless of their parent's gender identity

- 6. What is the Best Interests of the Child standard?** In all cases, courts determine how parents share custody and parenting time based on a standard called the Best Interests of the Child standard. Using this standard, courts take into consideration factors including the roles of each parent prior to their break-up, the age of the child,

and the ability of each parent to provide for the physical and emotional care of the child. For older children, courts may be interested in learning what the child’s wishes are. In some cases, a court can appoint a person called a “guardian ad litem” to represent the interests of the child in the legal proceedings or to investigate and report to the court on more detailed facts about the child’s family life. (Sometimes the court pays for a guardian ad litem and sometimes the parent or parents pay for it).

- 7. How can transgender parents find a trans-knowledgeable attorney?** Having a transgender affirming lawyer is important. It can take time to interview and research lawyers. And, sometimes you might work with a lawyer who you find to be not affirming, and you need to part ways. Although you do not want to work with too many different lawyers, it is important for you to feel safe and understood in that lawyer/client relationship.

Here are some places where transgender parents can seek legal assistance, legal referrals, legal information and other resources:

| Name | Phone | Email |
|---|---------------------|--|
| GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) | 800-455-GLAD (4523) | www.gladanswers.org |
| National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) | 415-392-6257 | www.nclrights.org |
| Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund | 212-809-8585 | www.lambdalegal.org |
| ACLU’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Project | 212-549-2627 | www.aclu.org/lgbt/index.html |
| National LGBTQ Bar Association | 202-637-7661 | https://lgbtqbar.org/ |

Additionally, any state and local bar associations have lists that identify LGBTQ-friendly and experienced attorneys:

| | |
|--|---|
| Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom | https://www.balif.org/ |
| Philadelphia LGBTQ Bar Association | https://www.philalgbtqbar.org/ |
| Bar of DC | https://lgbtbardc.org/ |

**Lesbian and Gay Bar Association
of Chicago**

<https://lagbac.org/>

**Lesbian and Gay Bar Association
of Greater New York (LEGAL)**

www.lgbtbarny.org/

Sylvia Rivera Law Project

<https://srlp.org/>



**GLBTQ Legal Advocates
& Defenders**

18 Tremont Street, Suite 950
Boston, MA 02108
gladlaw@glad.org
www.glad.org

COLAGE

PO Box 29295
Providence, RI 02909
ptpsupport@colage.org
www.colage.org

[1] For a listing of all of the states and access to the forms:
<https://www.glad.org/voluntary-acknowledgment-of-parentage/>



People with Trans Parents Program

Transition Tips for Parents

Since there are very few parenting resources available to transgender people, we have included these best practices for transitioning parents. Of course, there are other issues involved in transgender parenting. See our *Transgender Family Resources List* for publications, websites, and parenting organizations. If you haven't already, please request a copy of our *People with Trans Parents Resource Guide*, read it over, and give it to your children.

Coming out to family is a major issue for transgender people and can be a difficult process. Please keep in mind that **the entire family transitions**, not just the transgender parent. Every member of the family needs time and support to adjust to the changes of a gender transition. The process of acceptance can take a while and is often ongoing. **You can let your children know - through language and action - that, no matter what, you will still be their parent.**

As a parent, you will need to find a way to prioritize your children while also taking care of your own needs and transition goals. Although transitioning is a very personal experience, you may find it helpful to explain the process to your family and include them in whatever moments you feel comfortable with; for example, you could ask a family member if they would like to come to an appointment with you.

Knowing your kids and the way they process will help you decide just what to say. If you are nervous, you can write it down first or practice with a friend. **Come out to them in an age-appropriate way** that fits with their personality. It's best to keep your sentences short and concise to **avoid overwhelming them with too much information** (such as details about surgeries or hormones). People's responses will vary - some children will ask a million questions and others will have no reaction at all. Keep in mind that they may not want to talk about it right away or may just want some space to think things over. They may show intense emotions because this is big news. Do not take it personally if your kids are having a hard time. Children that have not had as much exposure to the LGBTQ+ community before a parent transitions may have a more difficult time at first. Regardless of their initial reaction, you can **make yourself available for future conversations.**

Many times, this is a monumental event, in that it changes the way your child sees the world. Throughout the transition, it's important to acknowledge that this is a process for everyone and that feelings are okay. At the same time, you are allowed to have your own feelings! Many trans people experience burnout from feeling as though they constantly have to explain themselves and their experiences. Finding other trans or queer identifying people to connect and vent with may be helpful.

If possible, you and your spouse/partner (or ex-spouse/ex-partner) should **create a united front** to support your children through your transition, especially if you are separating or divorcing. Continue to be a responsible, caring parent and remind them that **you will love them no matter what.** You can also provide your children with transitional objects, such as a letter or card, something they can hold onto to remind them that you will always be their parent. Many PTPs fear that they will lose their parent during or after transition. By being a consistent and loving presence in your children's lives, you can maintain valuable relationships.

Children benefit when you involve them as much as possible. Try to give them advance notice about decisions you are making and how they may impact your appearance, your day-to-day lives, or your family. When possible, make some decisions together. **Respect your children's wishes about how, when, and to whom they come out about you.** We encourage you to **give them a say about what to call you** and how involved you will be

in their public lives. If the decisions your child is making about these issues are hard for you, discuss your feelings with other adults, trans parents, or therapists, rather than expecting your child to take care of you.

Your child may benefit from additional support throughout your transition. You can provide them with options of other supportive adults to talk with, such as a therapist or family friend. **Encourage them to connect with other people with LGBT parents through COLAGE** - either locally or through the internet. As a parent, you can help them understand that there is so much difference in the world and everyone is explaining their own difference. Ultimately, that is the gift of having a transgender parent.

Visit www.colage.org to:

- **Connect your children with other people with trans parents through our PTP Facebook group or Discord server.**
- **Access our other resources for LGBTQ Parents and their children.**
- **Contact the People with Trans Parents program: ptpsupport@colage.org.**

Transgender Family Resources

If you are a youth or adult with one or more transgender parents, we hope the following resources will give you opportunities to connect to community and find resources to support you. This list is also helpful for transgender parents and families looking for resources, support or advocacy opportunities. Please do not hesitate to email ptpsupport@colage.org to connect with our People with Trans Parents Team for more information about our People with Trans Parents Program.

Groups/Organizations for Transgender Parents & Their Children

COLAGE

COLAGE is a national movement of people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parents. We build community and work toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy.

Programs include: online communities, visibility and support resources, local and regional events, and national education and advocacy.

The COLAGE People with Trans Parents program offers workshops and presentations at national and regional events as well as resources and programs specifically for people with one or more transgender parent/s. ptpsupport@colage.org, www.colage.org

FORGE – For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression

FORGE is a national education, advocacy and support umbrella organization supporting trans people, partners, family members, and allies. Materials addressing racism, positive sexuality, violence, and transition. Many resources for building healthy families, resolving problems in relationships, and parenting skills.

www.forge-forward.org

PFLAG

Maintains more than 450 affiliate chapters across the country. Some include members of the Transgender Support Special Outreach Network. *Parents, Family, Friends of Lesbians and Gays.* <https://pflag.org>

National Center for Transgender Equality

NCTE works for the advancement of transgender people using collaboration, education, and empowerment. www.nctequality.org

NGLTF – Transgender Civil Rights Project

NGLTF is a national progressive organization working for LGBT civil rights. Their Transgender Civil Rights Project works to increase the number of state, local and federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender expression and identity. <https://www.thetaskforce.org>

NCLR

NCLR advocates for the legal rights of transgender people in the area of parenting, custody/visitation, second-parent adoption, and other important issues. They also provide legal information and referrals. www.nclrights.org

Transgender Law Center

The largest trans-led, trans-specific organization in the United States. They have advocated and litigated in areas regarding employment, healthcare, education and more to further advance and protect the rights of trans people in this country. <https://transgenderlawcenter.org>

Support Group

PTP Facebook Group

Moderated Facebook group for people with with transgender parents.
Email PTPsupport@colage.org with your name to be added to the Facebook group.

Discord Server

Moderated channel for people with with transgender parents as part of the COLAGE Discord server. Learn more about our Discord at www.colage.org.

Media

**Some of these resources are older and may include language that is no longer appropriate. Please refer to our list of terms to resolve any confusion.*

Internet Resources & Articles

COLAGE

Check our website for updates from the People with Trans Parents program.

<https://www.colage.org/programs/trans-parents>

You can sign up for the COLAGE newsletter by visiting www.colage.org.

FTM International

An international organization serving the FTM community. FTMI_AFLOAT is a listserve for significant others, family, and friends of FTMs. <http://www.ftmi.org/>

My Mommy Is a Boy

Article discussing issues of transgender parenting with advice for parents coming out and mention of COLAGE People with Trans Parents program. (Title taken from the children's story 'My Mommy Is a Boy' which can be ordered at <http://jcarsner.tripod.com/id23.html>) News story at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=4536604&page=1>

Coming Out Trans To Your Children: A Step-by-Step Guide

A transgender parent shares her insights on coming out to one's kids.

<https://medium.com/empowered-trans-woman/when-dad-becomes-mom-2db5cec79942>

A Seat on the SOFFA

A blog written by Monica Canfield-Lenfest about her work to increase visibility and develop resources for people with transgender parents.

<http://supersoffa.blogspot.com>

Susan's Place, Transgender Resources

A good place to search for Transgender information, articles, groups and so on. website: <http://www.susans.org/>

Books & Publications

Featured Resource: COLAGE Staff Pick!

My Trans Parent: A User Guide for When Your Parent Transitions.

Heather Bryant, 2020. This guide covers everything you need to know. How will the transition impact your life? This book answers your questions and guides you through every stage. With chapters on navigating the changes in your family, finding community, going through the transition as a family, and much, much more, you'll see how other people have handled these experiences, and learn how you can too. When a parent transitions, the whole family transitions. From definitions to names and pronouns, you'll find all you need to support yourself and your family through the transition and beyond.

My Maddy. *Gayle Pitman, PhD. 2020.*

Most mommies are girls. Most daddies are boys. But lots of parents are neither a boy nor a girl. Like my Maddy. My Maddy has hazel eyes which are not brown or green. And my Maddy likes sporks because they are not quite a spoon or a fork. Some of the best things in the world are not one thing or the other. They are something in between and entirely their own.

Dress Codes: Of Three Girlhoods--My Mother's, My Father's, and Mine.

N. Howey, Picador USA, NY. 2002. The adult daughter of a straight mother and transgender father provides a memoir of moving observations, that captures the experience of growing up with a transgender father in suburban Ohio.

Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell it Like it Is.

A. Garner. Harper Collins. 2004. This book interweaves the author's personal experiences of growing up with a gay father and straight mother, with those of other adult children of LGBT parents, based on 8 years of activism and over 50 interviews. Features several adults with one or more transgender parent/s.

The Ties That (Don't) Bind: Transgender Family Law and the

Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents and their Families.

Peggy Gillespie. University of Massachusetts Press. 1999. A book filled with loving portraits and stories of LGBT families.

I Hope the Blood Never Washes Off Your Hands: Transgender Parenting Crossing the Lines.

Loree Cook-Daniels, in Home Front: Controversies in Nontraditional Parenting, edited by Jess Wells. Alyson Books. 2000. An essay by the partner of an FTM parent who birthed their son, which examines the social challenges of transgender parenting.

Out of the Ordinary: Essays on Growing Up with Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Parents.

N. Howey, and E. Samuels (ed). St. Martin's Press. New York, NY. 2000. A unique anthology of stories written by teens and adults with lesbian, gay, and transgender parents. This is the largest collection of essays by people with transgender parents and is highly recommended for teens and adults.

Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with

Unmaking of Families. Taylor Flynn, in *Transgender Rights*, edited by P. Currah, R. Juang, and S. Minter. U of Minnesota Press. 2006. This essay provides an overview of family law as it has been applied to transgender parents.

Transformations: Cross-dressers and Those Who Love Them.

Mariette Pathy Allen. Dutton. 1989. Portraits of cross-dressers, some of whom are photographed with their children.

Luna. J.A. Peters. Little, Brown, and Co. 2004. A young adult novel written from the perspective of the sister of a transgender youth. Appropriate for ages 12 and up.

Gender-Variant People and Their Families.

Arlene Istar Lev. Haworth Press. 2004. A guide for therapists working with transgender clients and their families from a clinical and theoretical perspective.

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones - M.

Boenke. Waterford Press. 1999. Thirty one stories by spouses, parents, children, and friends exploring the journey, struggle, and delight of having a transgendered loved one.

She's My Dad! Sarah Savage, 2020. This brightly illustrated book for children aged 3 - 7 will aid discussion with children about a loved one transitioning or about trans people in general. Featuring a child with a dad who has transitioned, this book passes on an important message about acceptance and respect, and covers pronouns, dysphoria, family diversity and misgendering.

Movies

Just Another Beautiful Family. Just an ordinary suburban family, except dad's trans, mom's queer, and there's 5 kids in the minivan. This is one family's true story of identity, trust, and transformation.

https://youtu.be/Vd7tr1OG_g0

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. A road movie about three transgender women driving through Australia. Toward the end of the film, one character meets her young son. 1994. Written and directed by Stephan Elliot.

The Adventures of Sebastien Cole. A coming of age indie film about a teenager who lives with his transgender step-parent and engages in risky behavior. The parent's coming out scene is fairly realistic, but there is an unrealistic death that may be difficult for some viewers. 1998. Rated R. Written and directed by Tod Williams.

Myth of Father. This documentary by Paul Hill provides an intimate look into the lives of Paul's family as they relate to his MTF father. 2003.

No Dumb Questions. A film by Melissa Regan. This documentary follows three young girls' conversations about gender and acceptance when they learn that Uncle Bill will soon be Aunt Barbara. This is a good resource for talking to younger children about a family member's transition.

Normal. An HBO film directed by Jane Andersen and starring Jessica Lange and Tom Wilkinson. This movie follows husband and father Roy through his coming out and transition, addressing the reactions of his wife, co-workers, and two children.

Southern Comfort. This tender documentary follows Robert Eads, a female-to-male transsexual, through the final year of his life as he battles ovarian cancer. One of Robert's adult sons is interviewed about his mom. 2001. Directed by Kate Davis.

Transamerica. The critically acclaimed film starring Felicity Huffman as a transgender woman who discovers she is the father of a grown son and embarks on a cross-country road trip. This movie explores issues of family, passing, and secrecy, and is intended for an adult audience. 2005. Directed by Duncan Tucker.

Transparent. A documentary film by Jules Rosskam about 19 female-to-male transsexuals living in the United States who have given birth and, in all but a few stories, gone on to raise their biological children. 2005.

<http://www.transparentthemovie.com/>

You Don't Know Dick: Courageous Hearts of Transsexual Men. A documentary film featuring six transmen reflecting on their experience of transition from female to male. One of the men has three grown children who are interviewed, one of whom is still struggling with her parent's transition. 1997. Produced and directed by Candace Schermerhorn and Bestor Cram.

Research Articles

- [Mom, Dad, or Somewhere In Between: Role-Relational Ambiguity and Children of Transgender Parents](#)
- [Transgender Parenting: A Review of Existing Research](#)
- [What Do We Know About Transgender Parenting? Findings from a Systemic Review](#)
- [Transphobia and other Stressors Impacting Trans Parents](#)
- [Social Connectedness Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents Living in Metropolitan and Regional and Rural Areas of Australia and New Zealand](#)
- [Making Trans Parents Visible: Intersectionality of Trans and Parenting Identities](#)
- [Transgender and Gender Non-Binary Parents' Pathways to Parenthood](#)
- [The Transgender Parent: Experiences and Constructions of Pregnancy and Parenthood for Transgender Men in Australia](#)