

From Me To You

Advice from individuals who
have/are transitioning

NORFOLK
LGBT+
PROJECT
SUPPORT INFORMATION ADVICE
www.norfolklgbtproject.co.uk

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Produced by Norfolk LGBT+ Project

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Introduction

It can be very challenging to come to terms with your transgender identity but it is not an unbearable task. Based on feelings and thoughts, you have undoubtedly known about your gender identity since you were young: female, male, or maybe not within the gender binary at all. You know what your gender identity is better than anybody else. Don't let anybody tell you that you aren't transgender, or that it's just a phase.

You are not alone, no matter where you are, you can find other transgender people but also understand that this is your transition and that each journey is different.

Don't hide it; it feels like a huge weight on your shoulders and it hurts. Come out to someone that you'd trust with your life. Write a speech, a letter, or notes beforehand unless your memory is very good. Go ahead and cry, if you need to.

Be prepared to field some basic questions about who you are and what this means for you.

Reading up on other people's coming out experiences will help you feel ready.

It helps to prepare some responses to rude or nosy questions beforehand.

Sometimes people act disbelieving, cold, or abrupt when they are surprised. If this happens, give them time to process it, and know that it may take a day or two for them to show you their true feelings.

If you want to avoid this, consider writing a letter.

Then the only reaction you'll see is one that has real thought behind it.

Be yourself. Don't feel ashamed of being who you are. If transition is what you want to do, then do it. Your gender identity is valid, and there is no shame in pursuing your own mental health and happiness

When the fact that I was trans clicked, the first people I turned to were my friends.

It can be daunting coming out to people you're close to- but if they're your true friends they will not abandon you in times like that. Having mine with me was like having a massive support system that wanted to see me happy and comfortable with who I was even more than I did. Most of them were there for me at 1am when I wasn't coping just to message me and make sure I was alright and I cannot thank them enough for that. Friends can be a kind of safety net that you can fall back on in any situation and that applies even more so here. They helped me eventually pluck-up the courage to tell my parents that I was trans after about a year of hiding it.

They are your ever-supporting-smile-courage-mechanism.

Friends are one way of coping mentally, but another huge one for me was YouTube. I know that this may not be conventional way of coping with accepting your identity, but it was an extraordinary help for me. There are some amazing trans YouTubers making advice videos and transition updates that can make your own transition easier.

The main two I watched (and still do) were two British transmen called Alex Bertie (therealalexbertie) and Jamie Raines (jammidodger) because not only are their videos fun, but they're also very informative about going about the transition process as a young trans person in the UK.

All I can really say is turn to people you're comfortable talking to and who will listen to you seriously, be it a teacher, a family member or a friend because they are most likely going to support you no matter what. Just love yourself for being yourself and live life the way you were meant to!

Dani.

I didn't come out until I was 29, I had become so depressed, not wanting to leave the house. Walking down the street I thought people were looking at me, I just couldn't face the world. Finally seeking help from my GP and I spoke to a psychiatrist. He ask me after about 30 minutes if I was ok in my own body? A snapped and proceeded to have ago at him and didn't want to go back for another appointment. Getting home, I spent the next few days going over things in my head. He had truly pushed a button asking me such a question, I wasn't happy in my own body, just didn't know it was making me feel this bad. Now six years later I can say I'm truly happy in myself, I'm having

hormones, had chest surgery and I volunteer with the Norfolk LGBT+ Project. If you are reading this and feel unsure about your gender?

Can relate to any story in this booklet? Or know someone who need support? The advice I offer to you is are not alone and you don't have to be. Contact the project, we are there to listen, offer you and your family support.

Reid.

Waiting for your first appointment at your selected gender identity clinic can be a pain. I was one of the lucky ones to get referred to Charing Cross, but even that didn't come without its problems. As a student my address has changed several times, and unfortunately this occurred during the time I was awaiting to hear about my initial appointment. For whatever reason my new address was not logged, and I only found out about the alleged 'missed' appointment by contacting my GP about something completely different. It was disheartening, but learn from my experience and ensure that they have all your details logged correctly. Even if you think they do, it's always wise to double check.

While it's difficult to wait when you have no control over time, there are small things you can do in the meantime to take back some

of that control. Work on being as happy with the current you as you can. Mine as a transgender man included looking at my diet, my clothing options, hairstyle, and finally joining a gym. These things won't work for everyone, but what is important is being as authentic to yourself as possible. This helps for the outside world to see you as the person you truly are, and not what society thinks you should be.

Finally, if you can surround yourself with good and open minded people, that will help a lot. This doesn't just mean friends and family, but those on the internet too. I have found a tone of advice and support from likeminded individuals on Twitter (but also, beware the trolls! The block and mute options exist for a reason, sadly!)

Lee.



BLAH LGBT+ Youth Project

Providing support for young LGBT+ people and those questioning their sexuality and

gender identity aged 25yrs and under.

For more information about BLAH LGBT+ Youth services and BLAH LGBT+ youth groups please email:

blah@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk

Facebook - **BLAH LGBT+ Youth Project**

Telephone no: **01603 219299**



Evolve

Evolve is MAP's monthly group when young transgender, genderqueer and gender-questioning people can

meet one another in a friendly and supportive place.

Email: **evolve@map.uk.net**

or call Linda Street on **01603 766994**

From Me To You

Support and advice for parents whose
children identify as transgender

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Introduction

As a parent, your children become your life, no matter who they are or what they become you will always be there for them. One of the times that they will need you the most is when they come out to you as transgender, they will be prepared for confusion, questions and possibly tears from you but all they will need from you is that reassurance they you still love them and accept them.

First of all, you must realise that you don't have to understand someone's identity in order to respect it. You really just need to accept that this is how they feel, how they identify, and who they are. By trying to debate it, you could very well end up pushing them away.

If you are in shock, or do not understand, that is perfectly normal. Just tell them, they know that there are going to be questions. Just let them know that you love them, and accept them. Tell them you are confused or are in shock and just ask for some time. Time to get your bearings, time to do some research, or just time to think about what it means.

Listen to them and use their language. If you do not know which pronouns to use, just ask. They have probably asked themselves the same questions that you would ask them. It's better to take a direct approach. If you are having a hard time transitioning to the new pronouns. Just apologize and let them know that it may take you some time to get a handle on it but it doesn't mean you do not respect them.

Educate yourself. No matter how much you think you know about gender identity, you can always learn more. Read as much as you can. Find out how you can best support your transgender child.

I am a parent of a son who was born with a female body and I am glowing with Pride. The journey has challenged me and I was already an open minded person before our journey began.

My son did not tell me outright but decided to start coming out socially at school. He choose a male name and his asked his friends at school to call him by that name which they did. I am embarrassed to say I was a bit slow on the uptake but I thought it may be him experimenting and searching as adolescents do. I could kick myself for that now as he had already said he was gay and had a girlfriend and that did not phase me at all.

I had brought him up to be open minded about sexuality. I had not considered gender though and didn't know much about it. Then things got a bit more serious, I realised I needed to listen and pay attention to what he was saying this was not a phase, he wasn't going to grow out of it.

I sought help though Norfolk LGBT+ Project, which was really helpful, I read loads and joined FB sites like Mermaids. I educated myself it all becomes easier over time.

I accepted my son for who he is and it was emotional for us both. I began to call him by his chosen name although I tried to change his mind in that and wanted it to be an

adaptation of his birth name. He has his hair cut short, changed his name at school at we went to see his GP who referred him to the Gender Clinic in London. We were lucky everyone supported him, we know this is not always the case.

It was really hard at first and I did feel I had lost my beautiful daughter but eventually felt he was there all the time and actually I had lost nothing but gained a strong and determined son. It's not all been easy, I've cried, doubted, worried for the future, dread the idea of him having operations in the future, cost me a fortune in buying binders and replacing the clothes to male. When I see him smile though it's all worth it.

It's painful to see his reaction when he is misgendered. The best bit of advice I would give any parent is support and listen to your child the risks of not doing so are too high.

No one wants their child to be unhappy, believe in them.

Jo.

I still remember the day my son sat me down because he said he had something serious to tell me. OMG he has some terminal disease and is dying is the first thing that came into my head and if it wasn't that then he had got some woman pregnant!

"I have been unhappy living in the wrong body for as long as I can remember and want to transition so I can be the real me" 17 years later and I still remember those words as if it was yesterday.

My advice to other parents? Listen and learn to everything your child has to tell you, yes there were difficult times, angry times and plenty of tears and some of those were tears of joy towards the end of her transition. I had two options, reject my child because of my own lack of understanding or continue to love and support her during this journey.

My daughter is the happiest I have ever know her to be, it's been an education for me and if honest I wouldn't have changed the experience for anything.

Jane.

The day my daughter told me she was to become a man was a day like any other, it seems a lifetime now and I can honestly say I accepted it right from the start.

I can remember what I said and that was as long as you are happy sweetheart that's all that matters, what I did have a problem with for a long time maybe over a year was saying he instead of she and I had many slip ups and that upset me more than anything, every time I did it I felt I was letting him down, but eventually it all just slotted into place.

You do feel a little apprehensive about what friends and family will say but I just thought true friends will be ok and they were and family as well .And if they weren't for me my son came first.

What is important is talking about how you feel because I know not everyone will find it easy, sometimes talking to a stranger can be easier than talking to friends but don't be afraid of all the emotions you will be feeling, just let your son or daughter know you are there for them because it's taken a great deal of courage and there maybe times they wish they had said nothing. I have always looked at this as I haven't lost a daughter but gained a happy loving son who is the same person inside just happier and more confident with himself, and as a mother I couldn't ask for more.

Linda.



Norfolk **TRANS** SOFA

A place for support, discussion, questions and confidential sharing for the Significant Others, Friends and Family, Allies, of Trans* & Gender Variant people.

This is not a group for Trans* or Non-binary Identified people, but a safe space for partners, friends and relatives, to discuss coming to terms with gender variance and how best to ally and support it. Covering grief, loss, adjustment, pronouns, coming out, relationship, legal, medical, mental health, and transition issues, in an informal atmosphere.

Meets last Tuesday of every month in Norwich (please message for venue)

www.facebook.com/groups/Norfolk.Trans.SOFA/ • 07808 970429

Parent To Parent

Providing support for parents of LGBT+ individuals, email and phone support is provided as well as 1:1 appointments.

*Parent
To
Parent*

Email: parents@norfolklgbtproject.co.uk

Phone: **01603 219299**