

HOW CAN I KNOW IF A CHILD IS TRANSGENDER?



HOW CAN I KNOW IF A CHILD OR YOUTH IS TRANSGENDER?

Transgender children/youth are plagued by the disapproval of others regarding their gender identity or expression. Determining whether a child/youth may be transgender is a delicate subject and needs to be approached with sensitivity, understanding and an open mind.

LISTEN:

Does the child/youth express the feeling that they would like to be, already are or will someday become the opposite gender? If so, they may be transgender.

Do they express the feeling that they don't feel like *either* a "boy" or a "girl"? They may be gender fluid or androgynous.

It's not uncommon for a transgender child to tell their parents at a very young age, "I am a boy" or "I am a girl." If so, treat those feelings as authentic and significant to the child.

OBSERVE (The following are indicators of gender nonconformity):

Take note of child's preference to spend time with playmates of the same or another gender. Notice whether there seems to be a significant pull for a male child to play primarily with girls or a female child to play primarily with boys.

Be sensitive to the inclination a male-bodied child/youth may have for wearing feminine clothing or accessories or a female-bodied child/youth's desire to look or dress male.

Pay attention to the kinds of toys or activities the child/youth is attracted to. (Do not, however, expect those preferences to always be stereotypically 'masculine' or 'feminine'.)

COMMUNICATE:

Speak with school teachers or day care workers for feedback on how the child/youth relates to schoolmates or any teasing or possibly hurtful labels being placed on them.

Talk to the child/youth about their aspirations and take note of signs of depression, anxiety or low self-esteem. They may feel shame, discomfort or embarrassment at sharing these feelings with others. Give them the opportunity to express their feelings freely and safely.

CONSULT:

Schedule an appointment for the child/youth to speak with a therapist experienced in childhood gender identity and gender expression.

AVOID any therapist that believes a child's gender identity can or should be changed to be more conforming or to prevent them becoming "gay" when they are older.