

Considering Coming Out as Gender Variant/Transgender to Your Parents?

Most of the time, young people know who they are long before others do. Parents/guardians can sometimes believe that they know their children well, when in fact; they don't really know them well at all. Disclosure of gender identity that differs from assigned birth sex can be difficult for others to understand and/or embrace.

Remember that you have had a long time to sort out your feelings and your gender identity. Your parents/guardian may have lived under the assumption that they've always known your gender identity. Depending on the circumstances, they may or may not be surprised to hear your feelings. Have a solid plan of action in place prior to disclosure and remember to be patient with them and their reactions!

Formulating a Plan For Coming Out

- **Do your research.**
- Learn about transition and what that means. (social vs. medical)
http://imatyfa.org/permanent_files/tyfa-faq-06-08.pdf
- Know that transition will fail without two critical elements.
 1. REALISTIC expectations.
 2. Self Acceptance.You must have both of these in order for transition to be successful.
- Learn about your options for medical transition if it is desired. Know what you need to do to make it happen. (Therapist, Family Doctor and Endocrinologist on board) TYFA can help your parents find supportive providers in your area.
- Think about your options for school. Will you openly transition in your current school or are there options for transitioning in a new school where you can remain stealth? TYFA provides training free of charge for school districts.
- Think about what you will do to take care of yourself (physically, mentally and emotionally) if your parents are not willing to listen to your feelings or threaten you with things like cutting off financial support or throwing you out of their home. Have a back-up plan in place if they are not supportive. That means having a support system in place (Therapist, friends and others) and understanding that your plan for transition may have to wait **but is still achievable**. Remember that ultimately, until you turn 18, (in most states) you are bound by the rules and decisions of your parents.
- Determine whether you wish to disclose in writing or face to face. Disclosing in writing allows the recipient to have time to digest the information and move past the initial reactions that may be hurtful to you.
- Expect the worst and hope for the best.

Things That Your Parents May Think or Feel After Disclosure:

GUILT:

- Believing that they did something to cause it. (They kept your hair too short or too long. They dressed you in the wrong colors. They didn't spend enough time with you, etc.)
- They believe that they should have seen this coming or figured it out themselves. (They failed as parents)

FEAR:

- They are afraid of what will happen next.
- They are afraid of what others will think.
- They are fearful for your future.

CONFUSION:

- They may think that you are gay or lesbian.
- They may think that you are ill, either mentally or physically and need medical attention.

DOUBT:

- They have religious beliefs that contradict your gender incongruence and/or decision to transition.
- They may believe that you are confused or have been influenced by some outside source. (another person, the internet or even demons)

Your parents may be in different places at different times during the process of acceptance. One parent may be more open and understanding than the other. Remember that they are going through a process. They are individuals that must progress at their own pace and in their own time. Give them the time and space that they need to learn and understand where you are.

Offer them resources. TYFA's recommended book list is a good place to start. <http://imatyfa.org/services/recommendedreading.html> Remind them that TYFA has an online support group just for parents, guardians and grandparents of kids just like you.

We have well over one hundred families represented on the list and the support of another parent who knows what they are feeling and going through can be invaluable. They can join TYFA Talk here: <http://imatyfa.org/services/onlineforums.html>

Remember first and foremost that **YOU** are an important part of their lives and an important part of this world. You must take care of yourself physically, mentally and emotionally; **REGARDLESS** of what your parents, friends or anyone else says, thinks or does. Whether you transition now, later or never, love yourself for who you know you are and seek support from a therapist, friends/loved ones or an organization like the ones listed below to help you accomplish that.

www.imatyfa.org

www.genderspectrum.org

www.thetrevorproject.org

www.glsen.org

www.pflag.org

www.transfamily.org

www.ftmentors.org

www.mtfmentors.org

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