

## How To Support Your Child When They Tell You They Are Non-Binary\*

When your child tells you they are non-binary, you might feel confused, worried, or unsure of what to do. You're not alone.

Non-binary means your child doesn't feel like a boy or a girl OR might feel like both a boy and a girl. Non-binary people can also be called transgender, or gender diverse.

**Being non-binary is not a problem or a mental health condition** — it's a natural part of human diversity. Non-binary people have always existed. There are thriving non-binary people living in your neighbourhood.

**Your child has shared who they truly are.** They are making that identity part of their social world. This can be a very vulnerable time for them, one they may have thought about for a long time. Children know who they are.

**Your support matters a lot.** Having your support will make a big difference in how easy or hard their life will be. The best way parents and carers can help their child is by accepting their child for who they are and who they say they are.

**Being non-binary is not "just a phase." Saying that can hurt them.** Non-binary children often feel different and may be treated unfairly, which can affect their mental, emotional, and physical health. However, parents and carers can be a strong support to help their child thrive and grow despite these unfair barriers.

When you listen to your child, respect their identity, and show love, you help them feel strong, happy, and supported.

### Here are ways you can do this:

#### 1. Learn about gender identity

- Understand what 'transgender', 'non-binary' and 'gender diverse' means.
- Educate yourself, research or find a peer navigation service for information and support.

#### 2. Follow your child's lead

- Use the name and pronouns your child asks for. This shows you care and respect them.
- Let your child express themselves through clothes, hairstyle, or activities that match their identity.

#### 3. Be kind to yourself

- Understand that your feelings are normal. You may feel scared about your child's future or safety.
- Talk to other parents of non-binary children and young people. Sharing stories can help.

#### 4. Create supportive and loving environments

- Make sure your child's school and community respect them. Talk to teachers, if needed.
- Show love and acceptance at home. This is very important for your child's confidence and mental health.

#### 5. Be patient

- Your child's feelings about their gender might grow or change. Support them through this process, as well as the child's siblings and wider family.
- It's okay not to have all the answers. Be willing to listen and learn.
- Families do not always come to accept the non-binary identity of their child at the same rate. That's OK but make sure that their slower pace does not negatively affect your child. Your child's need for support comes before their parents or carers need to process what is happening.

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### 6. Get support from services

- Find doctors or counsellors who understand non-binary children and young people. They can give evidence-based advice and help.
- Contact peer support services and community organisations and persist until you get what you need.
- Find opportunities for your child to meet other non-binary children.

### 7. Look after yourself

- To look after your child, you need to look after yourself.
- Process your feelings with a partner, family members, a close friend or a therapist. It is not your child's responsibility to deal with any feelings you experience.

### 8. Understand your parenting style

- The best approach or parenting style is to listen to your child. This is also called 'child-centred parenting'. Be guided by your child rather than your own ideas about them, for example:
  - Respect your child's independence.
  - Listen to their opinions.
  - Support their choices.
  - Talk to them about what to do next.
  - Check in often to make sure you are helping them in the right way.

\*in this guide 'non-binary' is also 'transgender' and 'gender diverse'.

## Find information:

Visit [transcend.org.au](https://transcend.org.au) for a chat, guides, tools for parents, and support groups to connect with families like yours.