

Making Sense of Change



A resource for parents and carers of a young person who identifies as transgender, gender diverse or non-binary, or who are questioning their gender identity.

If your child has expressed they might be trans, gender diverse or non-binary, you might be feeling a mix of uncertainty and mixed emotions. You are not alone in feeling them. It is normal for anyone to experience an emotional response when there are big changes as you try to adapt to new understandings of your child.

You might experience thoughts like these:

I felt sad, then I felt bad for feeling that way. I didn't want my child to think I was upset at them. I just needed time to understand. I learned it's okay to feel more than one thing; love and sadness can happen at the same time.



It felt like I was letting go of ideas I had held for a long time. Learning more about my child helped me realise that they were still themselves—just expressing it more honestly.



I cried, but I didn't know why. Nothing bad happened, but I felt like something had changed. I missed the old name, the old photos. I felt sad, even though my child was still here. It was confusing.



It felt like I was losing the child I thought I knew. When my child told me they are trans, I was surprised. I loved my child deeply, and I also needed time to catch up emotionally. I learned that love and uncertainty can exist together.



I used to think about the future — what they might wear at a wedding, or the things we would do together. Now I know it will be different. I still love them, but I felt a bit lost for a while.



Making Sense of Change

Navigating change and adjusting

For many families, parents, carers or siblings, learning that a young person in their care is transgender, gender diverse or non-binary can bring a wide range of feelings. Alongside love and support, some people notice feelings of uncertainty, sadness, confusion, or a sense of needing time to adjust. These feelings may arise early, or emerge gradually.

Not everyone experiences this in the same way. Some families move through change easily, while others need space to reflect and make sense of what this new understanding means for them.

This is called ambiguous grief – and it's common for parents to feel this. It is a period of holding mixed emotions, letting go of assumptions, and adapting while staying connected with your child. It is an opportunity to re-imagine the future together.

What you can do:

- Take your time – It's okay to feel unsure. Feelings can take time to work through.
- Talk to someone – You can speak to a friend, a support group, or a counsellor.
- Keep showing love – Your child still needs your love, support and care.
- Learn a little at a time – Try reading or listening to stories from other parents or trans people.
- Remember: your child is still your child – They are just helping you see them more clearly.
- Write it down – If you feel overwhelmed, writing your thoughts or questions can help.

Some parents describe this experience as adjusting to change that doesn't have a clear end point—it's an ongoing process of learning, understanding, and growing alongside your child. This is common, and it doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong.

What matters most is that your child continues to feel your care, connection and commitment.

Helpful reminders for parents and carers:

- **You deserve support too** - reaching out can help.
- **Be kind to yourself** - this is a learning process.
- **Take your time** - You don't have to understand everything right away. Understanding can grow gradually.
- **Stay connected** to your child's feelings as well as your own.



Why Support Matters

- When kids feel loved and safe, they are happier and healthier.
- Kids who are supported at home do better at school and in life.
- Living in an environment that is not supportive is linked to poor mental health, homelessness and suicide.
- Support from family and caregivers leads to higher self-esteem and better mental health.