

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are people gay because they have been traumatized?

Some people experience trauma in their lives and other don't. This is true for both LGBTQ people and straight people. Trauma is an unfortunate part of many people's lives. There is no link between sexual or physical abuse and sexual orientation. Sometimes when someone close to us tells us they are LGBTQ, we want to know why or we try to think about what we could have done to prevent them from being LGBTQ. Being LGBTQ is not a choice or a consequence; it is natural and has existed throughout history in every culture. We should work toward embracing our LGBTQ family members, friends and neighbors not trying to change them.

My son says he's bisexual. Is he just confused?

Bisexual people are not confused. They have the ability to love people beyond their gender. Being bisexual means that you are attracted to a person regardless of their gender. Some bisexual people tend to favor either the same or the opposite sex, while recognizing their attraction to both genders. Most people know it is possible for a person to be attracted to people of more than one height, weight, hair color, or race. For bisexuals that openness also includes gender.



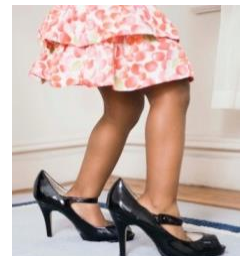
What did I do to make my daughter want to change genders?

In their heart and in their mind your child has always been the gender they are transitioning into. As a newborn, someone looked at their body and decided their gender. In some cases, the body doesn't match the gender the person feels inside. Your child is changing their outward appearance to match the way they have always felt. This transition will help them be who they were meant to be. Your support and understanding will be critical throughout this process. Using the name (and pronouns) your child has chosen is an important way to show your support.

Why does my son dress like a woman?

Clothes don't have genders. Wearing clothes that makes us feel comfortable, confident, and happy is our right. To strengthen your relationship and have a better understanding of your son, try discussing gender identity and expression with him at an age appropriate level. There could be a few things going on. Here are a few possibilities to consider:

- 1) Your son might like to wear feminine clothes and choose to express himself in that way. Just like we have preferences when it comes to our favorite colors and fabrics, some boys might prefer to wear clothes that are thought of as feminine.
- 2) Your son might be a performer and dress in drag to entertain his fans. Drag is a creative outlet, a means of self-exploration, and a way to make cultural statements. Often drag performers will exaggerate certain characteristics such as make-up and eyelashes for comic or dramatic effect.
- 3) It is possible that your child was assigned the wrong gender at birth. This means they identify as a woman and would like the world to see them and address them as a woman. In this case, dressing like a woman helps them live their lives as the gender they are, not the one they were assigned.



Regardless of why your child is dressing in what society considers feminine clothes, it is important to show your support, acceptance and continue to love them as you always have.

Is being gay a choice? I know someone who was in a “normal” relationship and then started dating someone of the same sex.

There are a lot of factors that go into who we have relationships with. Attraction is only one of them. We often take into account religion, standards of beauty, and what our family and peers will think. These factors are just a few of the things LGBTQ people battle just to discover their sexual orientation. Often times we follow the traditional path to opposite sex relationships, marriage, and kids before realizing we are not happy or comfortable. This happens for both heterosexual and homosexual people. LGBTQ people have to break the mold of what is expected for them within their families, communities, and cultures. This is a difficult risk to take for many people. This is why family acceptance of LGBTQ people is so important and why the consequences of family rejection can be so severe.

Are my child’s new friends causing a change in their sexual identity?

Peer pressure is often a big influence on youth but typically the pressure is to be part of mainstream culture. Many youth that identify as LGBTQ face bullying and have to fight for their basic rights in schools. Youth would not choose to be LGBTQ to fit in with friends. If your child is exploring their gender and sexual orientation, it is because they feel different and are challenging how society expects them to be. Many youth know from a young age that they are LGBTQ. Your child may be seeking peer support from LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth as part of their coming out process. Welcome your child’s new friends and use it as an opportunity to have an open conversation about gender and sexual orientation within your family.

I’m really masculine. How is my son gay? Where did he get it from?

Your son’s sexual orientation is not a reflection on you or the way you raised him. Being gay is natural and normal. Just like you are not exactly like your father, your son differs from you in this way. Having your love and acceptance will be an important part of his development and well-being. Focus on your shared interests and similarities, instead of on how you are different to continue to build a strong bond with your son regardless of his sexual orientation.

