



SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF TRANSGENDER/GENDER DIVERSE YOUTH

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Objectives

- Review the importance of parental/familial support of transgender and gender diverse youth and implications for mental health
- Understand barriers to parental/familial support and identify strategies for engaging families in their child's care.
- Review non-medical affirmation options for youth and how to support/educate families in exploring these options.

Family Support Matters

- Multiple studies have demonstrated that parental/family support for TGD youth is associated with:
 - Decreased Depression and Anxiety
 - Higher Life Satisfaction
 - Decreased Substance Abuse
 - Decreased Suicidality and Attempts
 - Higher Self-Esteem



“SOCIALLY TRANSITIONED TRANSGENDER CHILDREN WHO ARE SUPPORTED IN THEIR GENDER IDENTITY HAVE DEVELOPMENTALLY NORMATIVE LEVELS OF DEPRESSION AND ONLY MINIMAL ELEVATIONS IN ANXIETY, SUGGESTING THAT PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IS NOT INEVITABLE WITHIN THIS GROUP. ESPECIALLY STRIKING IS THE COMPARISON WITH REPORTS OF CHILDREN WITH GID; SOCIALLY TRANSITIONED TRANSGENDER CHILDREN HAVE NOTABLY LOWER RATES OF INTERNALIZING PSYCHOPATHOLOGY THAN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED AMONG CHILDREN WITH GID LIVING AS THEIR NATAL SEX.”

Olson, K. R., Durwood, L., DeMeules, M., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2016). Mental health of transgender children who are supported in their identities. *Pediatrics*, peds-2015.

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TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

Infographic Design by Landyn Pan Illustrations by Ethan Lopez



Why Support for Trans Youth Matters

Based on a 2012 study of 433 individuals

Trans Youth with Supportive Parents

Trans Youth with Unsupportive Parents



Reported Life Satisfaction

72%

33%

Reported High Self-Esteem



64%

13%



Described Mental Health As "Very Good" or "Excellent"

70%

15%

Faced Housing Problems



0%

55%

Suffered Depression



23%

75%

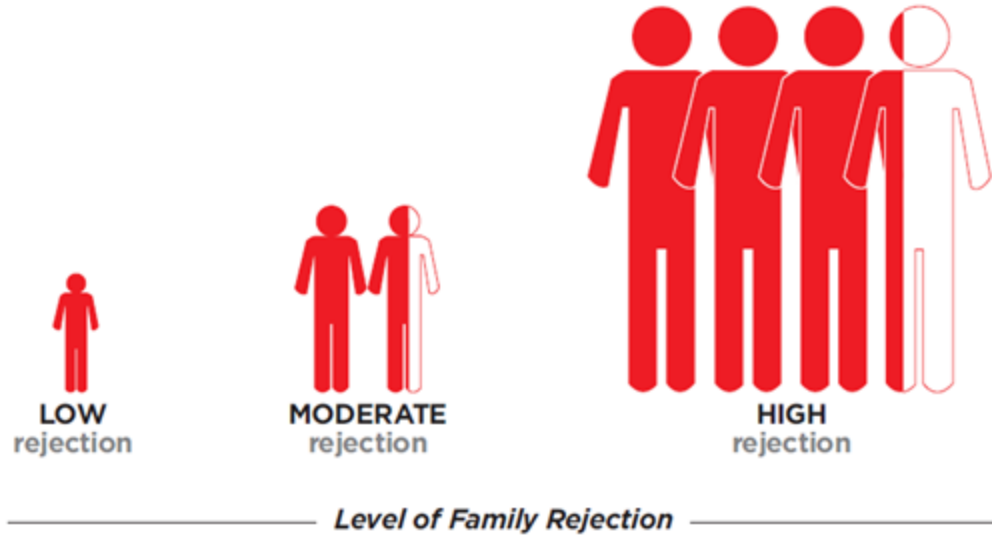


Attempted Suicide

4%

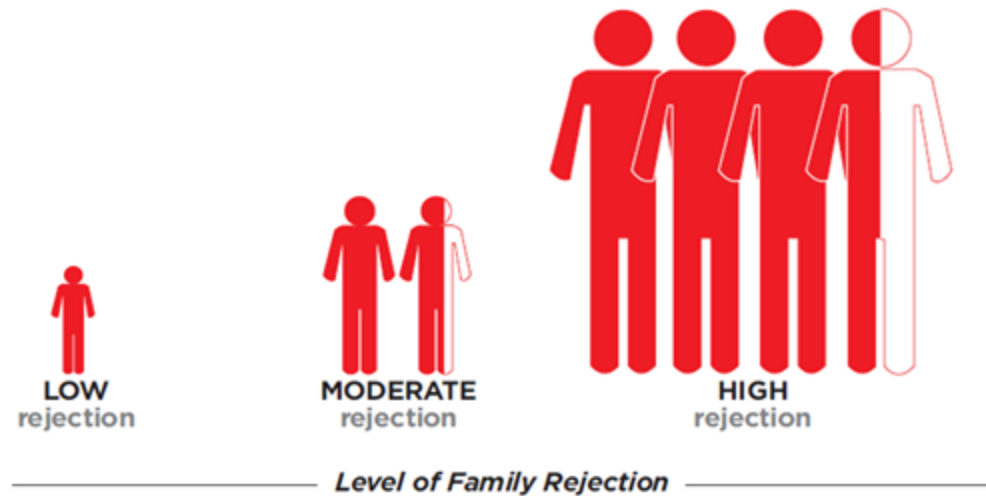
57%

Illegal Drug Use



Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009

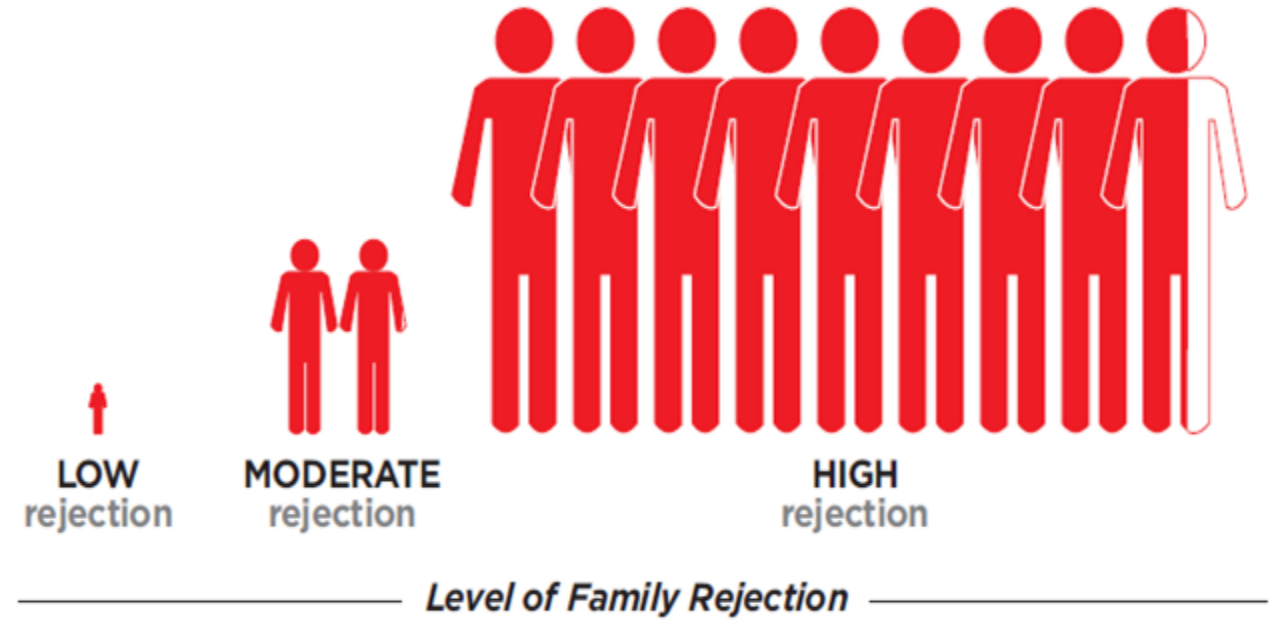
Risk for HIV Infection



Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009

Lifetime Suicide Attempts for Highly Rejected LGBT Young People

(One or more times)



Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009



What is “support?”

- Challenges to the term “support”
- Listening to your child and believing what they say is true
- Openly communicating with your child
- Demonstrating support through social affirmation
 - *Using child’s chosen name and pronouns*
 - *Allowing child to dress in ways that are affirming*
 - *Encouraging others to use correct name and pronouns*
- Finding safe spaces for your child to explore their gender
 - *Individual therapy*
 - *Peer/support groups/ GSA*

Barriers to Familial Support

- Lack of information
- Religious /Cultural Beliefs
- Transphobia/Cisnormativity
- Concern's about child's future/safety
- Worry about judgement from others
- Denial



Caregiver Emotional Experiences

■ Denial

- *Shock, confusion*
- *“I keep trying to wake myself up from this.”*
- *“This is just a phase.”*

■ Anger

- *Fear, Shame*
- *“What did we do wrong?”*
- *“Why do we have to deal with this?”*
- *“How could God do this to me? To my child?”*



■ Bargaining

- *Compromising, looking for a way out*
- *“You can only dress in your ‘pretty clothes’ at home.”*
- *“Maybe you’re just a butch lesbian.”*
- *“Can’t you just pick a gender?”*

■ Depression

- *Grief, loss, ambivalent loss, guilt*
- *Loss of vision/expectations for one’s child*
- *Loss of one’s own support (family, community, church)*
- *Sadness about perceived struggles for child*
- *Reconciling the past*

■ Acceptance

- *Understanding, “letting go”*
- *Accepting child’s identity and integrating that into family*
- *“I’ve given up on trying to find a ‘why.’”*
- *“I see how much happier my child is now.”*

■ Advocacy

- *Pride, joy*
- *Celebrating your trans child and seeing the positives*
 - *“I got to show my son how to tie a tie for the first time.”*
- *Advocating on a larger scale for your child and other TGD youth/people*

What do families need?

- Someone to answer questions and address concerns:
 - *Is this a phase? What if they change their mind?*
 - *I don't believe in transgender*
 - *If I support this I am just encouraging them to be transgender*
 - *Is this safe?*
 - *How did this happen?*
 - *I don't understand*
 - *How can they make decisions so young?*
 - *Can we just wait until they are 18?*
 - *Will others (parents, family, providers) judge me?*
 - *Where is the scientific proof?*

What do families need?

■ Space

- *To process difficult emotions without their child present*
- *To feel safe and not judged*
- *To explore own beliefs and biases*
- *Individual therapy, family support groups*

■ Information

- *On gender diverse identities*
- *On how to support their TGD child/family member*
- *On how their support impacts their child/family member*



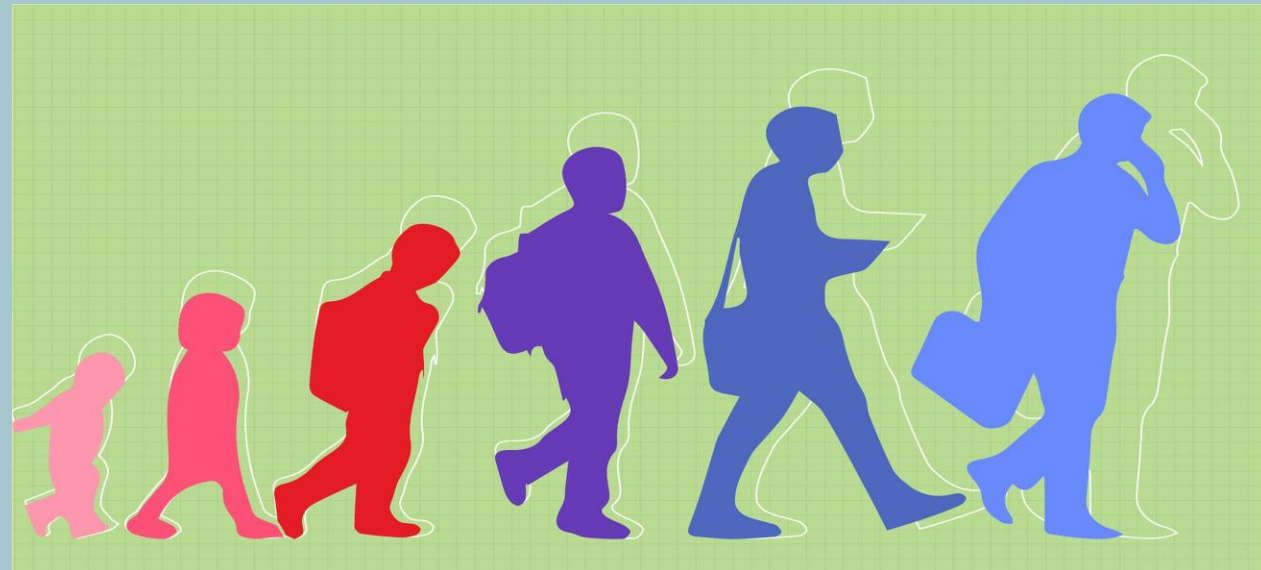
Promoting Familial Acceptance

- Acceptance is a process of reframing
 - *Moving families from “why did this happen” to “how do we support our child”*
- Normalize ambivalence and validate difficult emotions
- Define shared goals
 - *Safe, healthy, happy*
- Encourage unconditional love and support (as we would for any child)
- Model affirmation (use of name/pronouns)
- Connect families with needed supports and psycho education



Developmental Considerations

- Pre-pubertal children
 - *Supporting gender play and exploration*
 - *Sitting with uncertainty*
 - *Social affirmation*
- Peri-pubertal/Post-pubertal
 - *Social affirmation*
 - *Decision making around medical interventions*
 - *Legal affirmation*
 - *Launching to adulthood*



Supporting Social Affirmation

- Use of name and pronouns
 - *Use of chosen name correlated with lower rates of depression and suicidality*
- Disclosure
 - *Supporting your child in telling others*
 - Family, friends, school, providers
- Gender Expression
 - *Supporting clothing, hair styles, etc that are affirming*
 - *Exploring safe use of affirming equipment*
 - Binding, Stand-to-Pee, Tucking/Gaffs, Padding

Binding

- Have information available of safe binding practices
 - <https://www.prideinpractice.org/articles/chest-binding-physician-guide/>
- Where to purchase binders:
 - *Gc2b*
 - *Underworks*
 - *FtM Essentials*
 - *Flavnt Streetwear*
 - *Shapeshifters*
 - *Transguy Supply*
- Free or reduced binders:
 - *Gender Gear “Preloved” binders*
 - *Point of Pride*
 - *Tumblr, Instagram*
 - *FTM Essentials Free Youth Binder*

Tucking / Gaffs

- Have information available of safe tucking practices
 - <https://www.prideinpractice.org/articles/transgender-genital-tucking-guide/>
- Where to purchase gaffs and compression underwear:
 - *Gender Gear*
 - *Origami Customs*
 - *EnFemme Style*
 - *Tuck Buddies*
- Free gaffs:
 - *Point of Pride*

Other Equipment

- Packers and Stand-To-Pees
 - *FTM Essentials*
 - *Transguy Supply*
 - *Reel Magic*
 - *Gender Cat*
- Chest Padding
 - *Amazon*



* Consider having examples of equipment available for youth and families to explore

Other Considerations

- When parents are outright rejecting
 - *Supporting and Affirming the child at every opportunity*
 - *Regularly assessing for safety*
 - *When does this cross the line to abuse? Medical neglect?*
- Consent
 - *Understand the laws in your state*
 - *When one parent is supportive and the other is not?*
- When DCF is involved/is the guardian
 - *Advocating for what is in the best interest of the child*
 - *Office of the Child Advocate*

Familial Support & Trans Adults

■ Partner(s), Spouse

- *Partners and spouses similarly experience a wide range of emotional responses to their partner coming out and affirming their gender*
- *Partners need space to process emotions*
- *Couple/unit needs space to redefine relationship and roles*

■ Children

- *Children's whose parents come out as transgender and/or affirm their gender also experience strong emotional responses*
- *Age plays a role in how children adjust/accept*
- *Children may benefit from individual and family therapy*

Resources Families

- PFLAG <https://www.pflag.org/>
- Family Acceptance Project <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>
- Gender Spectrum www.genderspectrum.org
- Trans Youth Family Allies <http://www.imatyfa.org/>
- Supporting and Caring for Transgender Children <https://www.hrc.org/resources/supporting-caring-for-transgender-children>
- *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals* by Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper (2008)
- *The Transgender Teen* by Stephanie A. Brill and Lisa Kenney (2016)
- *Helping Your Transgender Teen* by Irwin Krieger

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Discussion

- Have you encountered family members who are not supportive? How have you managed this?
- How do you keep parents engaged when they are not supportive? How do you keep them engaged enough so their child is able to continue receiving care?
- How do you navigate parents who do not agree with each other about how to best support their child?
- How do you support children when parents are rejecting? When parents don't know?