



THE TRANSFAMILY GENDER JOURNEY MAP

A Tool for Joining with Families and
Helping Family Members of
Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender
Expansive People

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Welcome to the TransFamily Gender Journey. This tool and infographic was designed in collaboration with parents from the TransFamily Alliance, a group of parents across the country raising and supporting transgender, non binary, and gender expansive (TGE) offspring of all ages. When a person transitions so does everyone in their family.

History & Development

Those of us working with TGE people and their families (parents primarily) who approach things developmentally noticed that family members seem to be on a similar path as their TGE family member, except they are often in different developmental locations. I set out to review the many identity development models out there for LGBT youth and their families to better understand their journey. I then interviewed several parents at different phases of their journey. The result we came up with is this model of 6 phases and the various tasks involved within each phase of the journey. As we started discussing the process that parents in particular go through, they were very clear that it was not linear, but circular and highly dependent on the needs of their TGE loved one at the time. It has quickly become a key part of the experience parents have and the education they have requested (and receive) in the TransFamily Alliance Network.

Understanding the Journey: A Quick Overview

The parents all agreed that when they first found out, they were in Phase 0 and had to work through the denial, etc. and the responsibility for properly gendering their child to come to a place where they could hear that this was a real issue for their kid. Next they worked hard to understand gender, what it was, and what was and wasn't possible. This is often where parents are when they find articles on contagion and rapid onset beliefs. They are searching for something that makes sense. This is also a time when they will reach out for the help of a therapist, doctor, or clinic. Most family members don't have the luxury of lingering in one phase until it's complete because when their loved one comes out to them, they are already way down the road in phase 4 & 5 and don't have much patience for their parent's or partner's seemingly slow process. Parents in particular are pulled very quickly into phases 4, 5, and 6 because of their kids needs and often, at least initially, bypass phase 3 and end up coming back to it later. Generally they cycle through phases 3-5 while their family members is finding their way, and eventually land solidly in the 5/6 phases at which time they will return to 3 as a part of 6 to help support other parents just beginning this journey.



Using the TransFamily Gender Journey Map as a Tool

The Map is very helpful as a visual representation for parents and partners to see where they are and what steps can help the moving forward. I have found that all family members relate to the map and find it very grounding. I often show it to them and explain the journey that many family members have, explaining that it is not linear. I then compare it to their TGE family members journey, showing the discord that occurs when in different developmental locations. This often helps parents, partners, and extended family feel more grounded and validated. It also helps them understand the urgency of their child or partner and why they are at odds. They often become more open to listening to their TGE loved one's experience and needs when they feel that their journey is valued at the very least by you. I also use this with TGE people to help them understand why their family members may seem unsupportive, acknowledging how long it took for them to get to where they are on their journey. Overall, walking through this map has helped many parents, partners, and grandparents have more compassion for themselves, feel more grounded in their next steps, validated in their experience, and better able to meet their TGE loved one where they are on the journey.

Have questions? Feel free to contact me and I'll do my best to fill in the gaps.
Warmly,

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