



www.TransActiveOnline.org

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Congratulations!

Making the decision to come out as trans*/genderqueer to your parent(s), caregiver(s), guardian(s) or loved ones is an important first-step towards being who you are and living the life you deserve. The first thing we always recommend to youth coming out to family members is to write a letter. A letter has many advantages:

- It allows you to completely say all that you need to say without interruption,
- It allows you to sleep on and then revise your own words until you feel comfortable with them, and
- It is courteous to the person you're coming out to because it gives them the opportunity to read, reread, and have their own private reactions before having to respond to you.

Initial reactions to big news can come from a place of surprise and often, a natural resistance to change. Giving loved ones the time and space to react privately makes it more likely they will respond thoughtfully - coming from a place of love and respect, which is better overall for both of you and your relationship.

Additionally, the letter format gives you the opportunity to include attachments for further reading. Your coming out should be personal and about the details of your individual journey, but it's natural for your loved ones to have questions about gender identity in general. We find that parents and caregivers are often more receptive to factual information coming from an outside source, separated from the personal emotion of your story. We've prepared a few resources you can pass on to your loved one; feel free to include them or others as you feel comfortable.

Wondering about what to write? Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Be Confident. You know who you are. You are sharing this aspect of your identity with your loved ones, not asking for their permission to be your authentic self. Tell them how long you've known you were different and how you came to realize that trans*/genderqueer/etc. is the term that best communicates your identity. This can help them understand this is not a phase, an impulsive decision, or "teenage rebellion".

Be Respectful. You want your family members to treat you with respect and support, so show the same towards them. Remind them that you love them and want them to know the

'real' you. Respect that this might be new to them and they may have a lot to learn about gender identity before they fully understand.

Be Reassuring. Your family loves you and consequently, they worry about you. More often than not, parents' negative reactions come from being worried about you, your future, and your safety. Reassure family and friends that you are and will always be the same person inside, with the same interests, sense of humor, etc. Tell them that you will be okay and know you can still have a happy life that includes college, a career, a family, travel - anything you wanted for your future previously is still possible!

Be Simple. Trans* identities can seem completely foreign to many people. Telling your parents "I'm a genderqueer/femme/transfag" is probably too much for them to swallow in one go. Let them get used to the idea of "transgender" before you hit them with the nuances. Think of it this way: If you were a gay man coming out, would your family also need to know the various gay sub-culture groups you belong to? Probably not - at least not right away.

Be Yourself. The most important thing is to relax and just tell your story! Keep it personal and about you.

End your letter with 'action steps'.

- What do you want or need from your family?
- If you got this resource from the "In a Bind" website, you probably want them to buy you a binder.
- You may also want them to start using a different name or pronouns for you. Let them know why these things are important to you.

It's also important to include a message about who you do or do not want them sharing this information with. Realize that your loved ones also need emotional support, so it's unfair to ask them to not tell anyone at all. It is appropriate, however, to ask that they let you have your own conversation with a sibling, other parent or family member first. Try not to wait too long though, because withholding information about something important and emotional can be quite stressful.

Finally, remember that this is not a "one and done" conversation. While some find it useful to continue the conversation in writing, you will eventually want to discuss this in person. In your letter, ask when a good time would be. This gives them a chance to digest this new information before having an in-person conversation and shows that you know and respect this.

We realize this may be a difficult time. If you have any questions or need additional support, please contact the "In a Bind" staff at inabind@transactiveonline.org or TransActive in general at info@transactiveonline.org. If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or need to talk to someone immediately, please call the **Trevor Project Lifeline-866-488-7386**.