**Prepare**

**Letting them know some news is coming**

* ‘There’s something important happening that I’d like to talk to you about.’
* ‘Hey, I’ve got some news.’
* ‘I’d love to find a time where we can talk about something when we won’t be interrupted. When is a good time for you?’
* ‘I’ve posted you a letter about something going on in our family.’
* ‘I’m about to send you an email that’s got some pretty big news in it.’
* ‘Can you please let me know when you’ve received it?’
* ‘I’d prefer you find a time where you can read through it carefully, so if you receive it and you’re busy at the time, please put it aside until you can really concentrate on what it says.’
* ‘We haven’t seen each other in a while, and there have been a few changes in our family. Are you free for a quick chat sometime so I can fill you in?’

**What to say (writing or speaking)**

**Introducing the news**

* ‘This is difficult to write, but it is important.’
* ‘I am writing this because you are so loved and dear to me and my family.’
* ‘I value our relationship and your support.’
* ‘There is some important information I need to share with you now.’
* ‘I need to share a potentially surprising truth with you.’
* ‘It is not new to us, it’s something that has been going on for a long time. But I feel that it’s now the right time to let you know.’
* ‘What I’m about to say might be hard for you to understand or even accept.’
* ‘I would like you to try to take this in with an open mind.’
* ‘I am nervous that this information might conflict with your [personal values / religious beliefs].’
* ‘May I please ask that you try to keep any judgemental comments aside and just listen until I have finished speaking? Afterwards, we can discuss it and I will be happy to listen to your thoughts and answer any questions you have.’
* ‘After reading this, you might have immediate questions. Or you might need some time to process your thoughts. Once you’ve finished reading, please contact me so we can make time to talk in detail, or to let me know you’ll need time before we do.’

**Talking clearly about your child’s gender identity**

* ‘We have come to learn that <child’s name>…
* ‘It has become clear to our family that <name>…
* ‘I would like to share with you that <name>…
* ‘<Name> has told us that [s/he / they]…
* ‘I believe that <name>…
* ‘I would like to let you know that <name>…

…[is / are] gender diverse.’

…[is / are] [transgender / non-binary].’

…now identifies as <gender identity>.’

…[is / are] actually [a girl / a boy / non-binary / <other>].’

…knows [herself / himself / themself] to be [a girl / a boy / non-binary / <other>].’

…has been living as [a girl / a boy / non-binary / <other>] for the last <timeframe>.’

…doesn’t fully identify as the gender we have been recognising [her / him / them] as.’

* ‘This means…
  + we assumed [s/he / they] were a [girl / boy], but we were wrong.’
  + [she feels her / he feels his / they feel their] gender does not match the [female / male] gender [s/he was / they were] assigned at birth.’
  + [s/he doesn’t feel / they don’t feel] like a girl or a boy. They feel like [both / neither / something in between].’
  + that [her / his] brain is wired to expect a [female / male] body and experience. [She / He] wants a [female / male] life.’
  + [She / He] feels  most comfortable living life as [girl / boy] and see themself growing up into a [woman / man].’
  + [She’s / He’s / They’re] uncomfortable that [her / his / their] body doesn’t match how [she feels in her / he feels in his / they feel in their] heart and mind.’
  + [She’s / He’s / They’re] experiencing significant distress in [her / his / their] body and wish desperately that its appearance could match the identity [s/he feels / they feel] inside.’
  + continuing to live as a [girl / boy] is causing [her / him / them] great emotional pain.’

**Clarifying what gender diversity is (and isn’t)**

* ‘I’d like you to please understand that, scientifically, gender diversity is considered a natural aspect of human diversity.’
* ‘It’s often diagnosed by a person’s discomfort in their physical body, feeling that it doesn’t fit with the gender they know themself to be.’
* ‘Sometimes it can be diagnosed by a child’s clear identification with a gender identity that is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth, even if they don’t feel uncomfortable in their body.’
* ‘Gender diversity has existed for thousands of years, with numerous records of it since the beginning of history.’
* ‘Gender diversity has been recognised and celebrated always by numerous cultures around the world.’

**Gender diversity is not:**

* a mental illness or disorder;
* a choice;
* a phase or something that can be forced out of someone;
* my child trying to be accepted by their peers;
* my fault or a result of “bad parenting”;
* the same as being gay – it’s separate to sexuality.’

**Letting them know you support your child**

* ‘This was difficult for me to understand at first too.’
* ‘Even though this is a difficult journey, I am supporting my child.’
* ‘This has been hard for me to accept. Even so, I have my child’s back and will be doing everything I can to support them.’
* ‘I am committed to supporting my child through this process.’
* ‘If [s/he / they] ever [change/s] their mind, I will support that too.’

**Talking positively**

* ‘I’ve already seen so much positive change in [her / him / them] since we’ve been using [her / his / their] new name and pronouns and [she’s / he’s / they’ve] been dressing differently.’
* ‘[She is / He is / They are] so much happier now. It’s been wonderful to see.’
* ‘I’m so proud of [her / him / them]. It’s been a big step for [her / him / them] to talk to me about it.’
* ‘[She / He / They] struggled alone and in silence for a long time about this. I’m so grateful [s/he’s / they’ve] had the courage to be true to [herself / himself / themself], even when it’s been such confronting news for [her / him / them] to share.’
* ‘I’m so proud of my child living their true life, even in the face of people rejecting or disbelieving [her / him / them].’
* ‘[She’s / He’s / They’ve] demonstrated such maturity in talking to me. I’m so proud [she’s / he’s / they’ve] had the courage to come out and say, “this is who I am”. We can all learn a lot from [her / him / them].’
* ‘There haven’t been any problems with it so far. The school is supportive and my child is just so much calmer and happier.’
* ‘Since [s/he’s / they’ve] been open with me about it, our relationship has grown and become stronger.’
* ‘Since [s/he’s / they’ve] told me, [s/he’s / they’ve] been doing better at school and seem to have made some close new friends.’
* ‘I know this is the best thing for [her / him / them] and will lead to the happiest outcome for our whole family.’

**Not downplaying the situation**

* ‘No, I don’t believe it’s just [her / him / them] being just a tomboy. This is who [s/he is / they are]. I trust [her, and her / him, and his / them, and their] understanding of [her / his / their] own gender.’
* ‘It’s true that boys can play with dolls then grow out of it. But there are many things I’ve witnessed that make me think it’s [her / him / them] showing us what [her / his / their] true identity is.’
* ‘I understand that you might think this is just a phase, but I know my child deeply. I witness the daily intricacies of [her / his / their] behaviour, and it’s clear to me that [s/he is / they are] not the gender we thought [s/he was / they were].’

**Acknowledging the risks…**

* ‘Gender diverse people experience discrimination, stigma, abuse, rejection and ridicule in society, and often within their own family.’
* ‘This is why being gender diverse is not a choice. No-one would choose to be gender diverse and open themself up to hatred, abuse and even violence. It can mean ridicule or social rejection, discrimination at school, in sports, in the workplace, and even in medical care.’
* ‘You may or may not be aware that because of all this discrimination, gender diverse children and young people have much higher rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidality than cisgender people.’

**…but being clear on the importance of affirming your child**

* ‘But numerous studies have concluded that support from parents and other family members reduces these risks *significantly*.’
* ‘Gender diverse children whose parents support them are less likely to suffer from mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety. And when parents are *strongly*supportive, the child is more likely to have higher wellbeing such as high self esteem and high life satisfaction.’
* In [*Trans Pathways*](https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/brain--behaviour/trans-pathwayreport-web.pdf), the 65.8% of gender diverse participants who reported a lack of family support also had higher rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts, harming themselves, risky behaviours, and other mental health diagnoses such as anxiety and depression than those who did not experience a lack of family support.
* ‘It’s been proven acceptance from parents and family members builds resilience against external stresses such as discrimination, and brings the mental health outcomes for gender diverse children almost back in line with their cisgender (i.e. not gender diverse) peers.
* ‘This is why it’s essential that I accept and support <name> as [s/he is / they are], and why I’m asking you to please do so too.’

**Discussing what will and won’t change about your child**

* ‘Part of accepting and affirming my child – and limiting the distress [her / his / their] physical appearance is causing [her / him / them] – is supporting [her in her/ him in his / them in their] transition.’
* ‘Transitioning will bring [her / his / their] physical and social presentation more in line with [her / his / their] gender identity.’
* ‘Transitioning will help align their life experiences with what they want [her / his / their] life to be.’
* ‘[She / He / They] will always be the same person you know and love.’
* ‘[She still loves / He still loves / They still love] <child’s interests> and would love to continue talking with you about those things.’
* ‘But [s/he has / they have] chosen a new name, which is <name>, and are using <pronouns> pronouns.’
* ‘There are also going to be a few changes in how [s/he / they] present [herself / himself / themself].’
* ‘[She / He / They] will be dressing differently to what you’ve been used to.’
* ‘[She / He / They] [will be getting / have had] a new hairstyle.’
* ‘Understand that they’re not actually *changing*into a [girl / boy]. They have *always*been a [girl / boy], and [they / we] simply hadn’t realised that until recently.’
* ‘There is the possibility that in the future, [s/he / they] may choose to access gender-affirming care to further affirm [her / his / their] gender. This will cause changes to [her / his / their] physical body.’
* ‘[She has / He has / They have] have started gender-affirming care to further affirm [her / his / their] gender. This has already begun causing changes to [her / his / their] physical body, which you may notice when you see them next.’

**Being explicit about your expectations and boundaries**

* ‘I have a few requests that I’d love you to please try your best to respect [her / him / them].’
* ‘Please be kind and respectful to [her / him / them] at all times. You can do this by:
  + using [her / his / their] new name and pronouns when you’re speaking to or about [her / him / them];
  + trying your best not to refer to [her / him / them] as a [girl / boy]; either when speaking to [her / him / them] or to anyone else;
  + briefly apologising if you make a mistake;
  + continuing to relate to [her / him / them] like the child you’ve always known and loved;
  + avoiding insults about [her / his / their] gender identity or physical appearance;
  + not asking inappropriate or unnecessary questions;
  + not discussing [her / his / their] gender identity with [her / him / them] or in front of [her / him / them] unless invited;
  + keeping [her / his / their] personal information confidential unless advised it’s OK to share;
  + explaining [her / his / their] gender diversity to your own [children / family];
  + buying gifts or clothes that suit [her / his / their] gender identity;
  + making an effort to learn about gender diversity;
  + trying your best to put personal prejudices aside and loving and accepting [her / him / them] as [s/he is / they are].’

**Asserting your boundaries if needed**

Firstly,

* ‘This is a delicate situation, and my child’s mental health and wellbeing is at risk. I would like to let you know some of the boundaries I have in place to make sure my child stays safe.’

Then…

* ‘If you do not make an effort to use my child’s new name and pronouns…
* ‘If you misgender [her / him / them]…
* ‘If you make a mistake and do not apologise genuinely…
* ‘If you turn a blind eye to anyone teasing or abusing my child…
* ‘If you disclose this information to anyone without our permission…
* ‘If you ask inappropriate, or too many questions…
* ‘If you undermine my commitment to support my own child…
* ‘If you try to talk me or my child out of this, or say they are wrong…
* ‘If you send me or my child any offensive or disrespectful messages…

…I will simply not respond.’

…I will be making time to talk with you again.’

…I would consider this a huge breach of trust and respect.’

…I will not allow you to spend time with my child until you resolve this.’

…I will have to stop contact with you until your behaviour changes.’

…I will not be prepared to talk with you again until you make efforts to respect us.’

**Encouraging them to continue relating to your child as before**

* ‘This news might make you feel like you won’t know what to say to them when you next see [her / him / them].’
* ‘Don’t forget, [s/he’s / they’re] still the same kid they always were.’
* ‘Talk to [her / him / them] about their interests, or what’s happening in sport, at school or with friends.’
* ‘You can offer [her / him / them] your support should [she / he / they] ever need it.’
* ‘If you’re finding this all very difficult to get used to, just tell [her / him / them] that you’re trying your best to understand.’
* ‘You should consider how to show your ongoing love and support of [her / him / them].’
* ‘But try to avoid being overly protective. Trust [her / him / them] to live [her / his / their] life, and recognise [her / his / their] courage!’

**Encourage them to do their own research**

* ‘There is so much information around to help people understand gender diversity in kids.’
* ‘Would you like me to send you some resources, or would you prefer to look for yourself?’
* ‘There are a lot of amazing resources on the [Transforming Families](http://52.63.65.75/resources/) website. It’s all Australian information, reviewed and fact-checked. You can read information online, or download and print out PDFs.’
* ‘You can also access peer support if you feel it would benefit you. Contact [Transcend Australia](https://transcend.org.au/contact/) or [Parents of Gender Diverse Children](https://www.pgdc.org.au/for_parents), and they can point you in the right direction for your needs.’

**To finish**

* ‘Thank you for listening / reading.’
* ‘I’m sure this has been a lot to take in and I appreciate you listening to / reading this.’
* ‘My child is so important to me, as is your relationship with [her / him / them].’
* ‘I’m sure you must have questions / things to say. Would you like to say / say them now, or shall we make another time to talk?’
* ‘If you are unable to find the capacity to support us with this right now, please let me know.’
* ‘I look forward to talking with you further.’
* ‘Any messages of love, support or acceptance will be so warmly received by me and my child.’

**Exit strategies should a conversation get challenging**

**Communicating your dissatisfaction with their reaction**

* ‘This conversation has become uncomfortable and I’m not sure how best to proceed.’
* ‘I need some time to process what you’ve said.’
* ‘I need to take some time out to manage my emotions.’
* ‘We obviously don’t see eye-to-eye on this.’
* ‘May we please agree to disagree and leave it at that right now?’
* ‘I can see that you’re having a hard time understanding this.’

**Ending the conversation**

* ‘I think we’d best leave this topic here for now.’
* ‘At this stage, I need to end this conversation.’
* ‘We might have to find another time to revisit this conversation’
* ‘That has really offended me. I’m going to have to end this conversation right now. Hopefully we’ll be able to talk again, but in a more respectful way. For now, I have to say goodbye.’
* ‘Let’s find some time in the future to revisit this, as it’s a crucial matter for our family.’
* ‘I don’t think we’re going to get any further with this right now, but I’m keen to continue our chat. May we please change the topic? How is <something else> going for you?’
* ‘Would you be open to taking some time to process how you’re feeling and returning to this conversation at a later time?’
* ‘Would you be open to doing some research on your own, and talking again at a later time? I can send you some resources to get you started.’