

Resources for Partners of Transgender People

Transgender Michigan's "Basic Terms and Definitions" Brochure

Transgender Michigan's Website:
www.transgendermichigan.org

"True Selves: Understanding Transgenderism - for Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals" by Mildred L. Brown & Chloe Ann Rounsley

"Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones" edited by Mary Boenke

"The Trans Partner Handbook: A Guide for When Your Partner Transitions" by Jo Green.

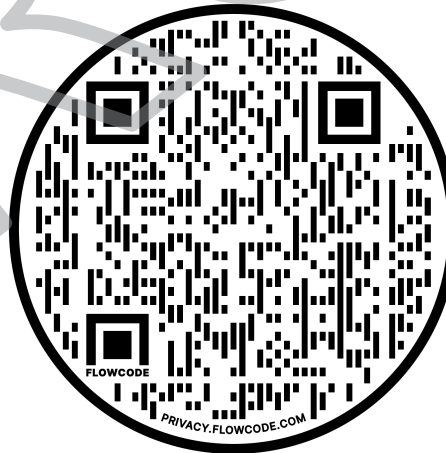
PFLAG pflag.org

Significant Others

Transgender Michigan

www.TransgenderMichigan.org

855-345-TGMI



My Partner Just Told Me They are Transgender

Help for Significant Others



Transgender Michigan

www.TransgenderMichigan.org

What do I do? My partner just told me s/he is transgender!

Take a deep breath and listen carefully.

Don't blame yourself. Try not to take it personally, this is not a reflection of you.

Try to remember that, while you may feel angry or hurt, it took a lot of courage for your partner to tell you about their transgender identity.

Don't be afraid to express your feelings, but try to do so gently and respectfully.

Learn as much as you can about transgender identity and issues, preferably from an outside source. Some good sources are listed in this brochure.

Be sure to find support, someone solely on your side, that you trust enough to express your emotions.

Bear in mind, if you can, that while your partner's exterior could change, most of their personality traits will stay the same, or become enhanced by their emerging confidence.

It is a natural feeling to want to support and protect your partner from pain, but keep in mind that your needs, wants, feelings and boundaries are important too. You have every right to express them without guilt or shame.

Be patient. An emerging identity as complex as transgender identity can have a large impact on a relationship as things change, sometimes it seems, overnight. It is important to realize that transition, whatever form it takes, eventually ends and life goes on. Your lives together will not always be in such a constant state of flux.

Sometimes with such a dramatic change comes grief or a sense of loss. It is justified to grieve the loss of your partner as they presented in the past. To deny these real emotions hinders the process of acceptance.

Know that you're not alone. There are many partners of transgender people in the world with healthy, loving relationships. Networking with others in your circumstance can be very empowering.

You might worry that your attraction to your partner will change as their body changes, and this is a possibility. Know your boundaries, but try to take it day by day.

You could also wonder how your partner's changing gender identity impacts your sexual orientation. You have the right to interpret and label your attraction in any way that makes sense to you. You might even decide that labels aren't important to you.

Sometimes sexual frustrations, confusions, and changes take place. Decreased libido can be sparked by one's body image, and sometimes, transgender partners might want certain parts of their body to be considered off-limits. While this can be confusing or even hurtful, try to respect their wishes while continuing to dialogue about feelings.

Whenever possible, try and respect your partner's wishes, especially when it comes to privacy. It is best not to reveal your partner's identity to others before they are ready, especially for the sake of safety.

Do not be angry with yourself if you accidentally use a name or pronoun other than that of your partner's choice. Apologize, correct yourself, and try your best next time.

Maintain respectful, loving dialog with your partner. Both of you deserve to have your needs met, whenever realistic, and communication is key to making this a reality.

Try not to be resentful of your partner wanting to attend transgender support groups. Many transgender individuals need such support to be able to sort through feelings of confusion, vent about frustrations, or celebrate with those who understand. Finding support can be a life or death issue.