

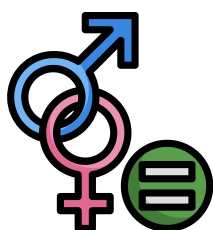


# HINENI - 8 WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR TRANS TEEN

**At the Blue Dove Foundation, we recognize that being a parent, guardian or loved one of a teenager isn't always easy.** So much in this world is constantly changing, and it can be hard to keep up. We all want to do right by our youth, but we don't always know how. Adults also need support when it comes to connecting with a trans teen.

## Part I | Basic Definitions

### CISGENDER



"A term used to refer to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth." It means the doctor held you up and said "this one's a girl," and as you grew and walked through the world, that felt right. Even if being a girl was hard at times, it was the right fit for you, and as you aged, you probably have started to identify as a woman.

### TRANSGENDER



An umbrella term for the many gender identities out there. For trans folks (the typical shortening of transgender), the gender given at birth doesn't necessarily align with who they know themselves to be. You might have met some transmasculine folks (those who currently identify as masculine), transfeminine folks (those who currently identify as feminine) or nonbinary trans folks (those who don't fit neatly into the gender binary). There are far more than three categories but these tend to get the most representation.

For many, terms used by teens might be unfamiliar, and they change quickly. PFLAG published this [glossary](#) with a specific breakdown of different identities that fall under the trans umbrella as well as other queer terms. (*PFLAG is the nation's largest organization dedicated to supporting, educating and advocating for the LGBTQ+ community.*)



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**So you know a teen who's trans.** You love them, maybe you're scared for them, but overall, you're here because you're feeling lost. What now?



**We want to say kol hakavod!** You care enough to have picked up a piece of literature. That in itself is amazing. For teens who have adults in their lives who are doing the research themselves, it's huge; it means the burden of education is not falling on the teen alone.



**We hear about gender a lot these days,** and it seems like a hot-button issue. But there's nothing new about the topic. Trans people have been around forever. According to Rabbi Elliot Kukla, Jewish tradition references at least six genders.



**We strongly suggest you not try to fix your kid.** We know that can be so hard, but they aren't broken. They might be struggling, but when we focus our efforts on coming up with solutions, we can unintentionally convince them we believe they are broken.

## Part II | Statistics You Should Know



**Up to 50% of trans teens will attempt suicide.** That's a really scary number. (American Academy of Pediatrics)



**Nearly 40% of trans and nonbinary teens experience homelessness and housing instability.** So when we talk about having loving and affirming grown-ups, we don't only mean parents. Teachers, grandparents, clergy, even a friend's parents all can play key roles. (The Trevor Project)



Here's where you come in: **Any trans teen who has even a single affirming adult in their life has a 40% reduction in the likelihood of attempting suicide.** Isn't that amazing? If you want to help your kid, it can be as simple as affirming them. (The Trevor Project)



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## Part III | Eight ways to be trans affirming



### 1. Names

Use the name your teen identifies with. It is totally valid if you have an emotional reaction to this; maybe you chose their name for a specific reason, like for someone you loved very dearly. But using a previous name is called “deadnaming” and can be really triggering to the teenager.



### 2. Know Their Pronouns

Find out what pronouns they like, and use them, even if you don't understand them. It might take some practice getting comfortable using different grammar or even new words, but that's OK. Much like how people will create customized terms to describe their sexuality, queer folks may have specialized pronouns that take the place of he/she/they. These are called “neo pronouns.” It's OK if you don't recognize them. It's OK to ask how they are pronounced if you aren't sure.



### 3. Clarify for Others

Unless your teen tells you not to, correct other people when they use the wrong pronoun. It might feel really natural to encourage your teen to let it go, or to not make a big deal of it, but when we do this they can get the message that we want them to be smaller. That it would be better if they were different than they were and if they took up less space. When a trans person has somebody stick up for them, it sends the clear message that we know they deserve to use their name and pronouns. It's a real and practical way we can support them.



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## 4. Do Your Homework

Try to learn about queer communities that might be important for your teen. Their school might have a common high school club for queer teens called the “Gay-Straight alliance” (GSA) and/or participate in a day of silence. There might be local teen groups, but if there aren't, there's most certainly a queer community online. We do encourage you to make sure your child is using the internet responsibly and safely, but the importance of being connected to a community cannot be understated.



## 5. Go Shopping

Take your teen shopping if you can and if they want to. If they want to go alone, try to make sure they have the resources they need. Trans teens might need some extra items, they might need a binder or specialty bathing suit if they're trans masculine. They might want shapewear or a breast form if they're transfeminine.

- If you can't afford to help your teen with certain things, please do not be ashamed. It's hard out there! See the bottom of this resource for affirming clothing.
- You might have to get comfortable with some items that feel really scary. A “breast form,” which comes in many sizes, sits on top of the chest and makes it look like a person has feminine breasts. A “packer” allows any person regardless of genitals to fill out a pair of men's pants in a way where they will sit right, especially with older teens. These are items they might be really interested in exploring.

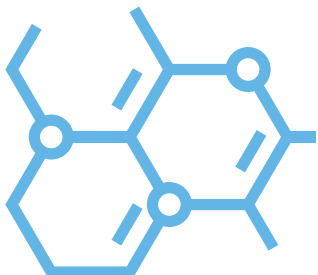


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## 6. Be Ready

This might sound a little frightening, but get ready to go to bat for your kid. Other adults in their life (like their school principal) might not understand what's going on; try not to make them navigate that alone. It's really important they have access to things like a safe bathroom. Find out if their school has a gender-neutral bathroom or what their policies are. Make sure your kid is allowed to attend a school dance. Remember, at the end of the day they're just teenagers; the goal is to help them have a safe teenage experience.



## 7. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

If and when your teen is ready, familiarize yourself with hormone replacement therapy (HRT), top/bottom surgeries and facial feminization. If you have insurance, get to know your insurance policies. These might sound scary, but bottom surgery as has a 99.7% success rate and general medical transition has a 93% success rate. ([Cornell Chronicle](#) / [Gender](#)) It might seem really alarming, but these success rates are through the roof. Try to do the research, so when your teen is ready to talk, you are as well. Or even better, approach your teen at a moment that feels appropriate. They may be thinking about HRT and have no idea if that's an option for them.



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## 8. Be Safe

If you can only do one thing for your teen, it's to establish yourself as a safe person. Your teenager is going to walk through the world, and they are going to encounter things that are new and intimidating to them. The one thing we don't want is for them to feel like they can't talk to you about it. More than anything, be prepared to listen. Every trans teen is different. You might have a kid who is really shy and terrified of coming out at school, or you might have a kid who is really proud and can't wait to show off their new bikini at a pool party. There is no wrong way to be trans.

## Part IV | Hineni – Be Present

When it comes to trans teens, just be present. You don't need to solve this, even if it feels like you want to “fix” things. Judaism holds a value of truly being in the moment, not just being in the room physically, but mentally, emotionally and spiritually as well. We have these wonderful stories in the Torah where Abraham and Moses tell God “hineni,” which literally means “I'm here” but thematically means “I'm present and I'm ready. I showed up to be here, in this moment with you, and I'm not only hearing, I'm listening.” Moses says it when he encounters the Burning Bush, Abraham says it when God calls to him for the Akaedaa, and we even see Samuel use the same language.

Remember, it's OK to not understand; we can love and support without understanding. Just be there with your kid and be ready. Read the literature and prepare yourself. That way, while your teen might have some extra struggles, you can be the adult who stops them from struggling alone.



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## Part V | Additional Resources

### Trans Clothing Resources:

- <https://www.staygoldfund.org/staygoldcloset>
- <https://standwithtrans.org/trans-lifeline-library-gender-affirming-shopping-free-frugal-low-cost-clothing-free-gender-affirming-items-article/>
- [https://www.alderhealth.org/programs-services/support\\_services/wellness-center/clothing-market.html](https://www.alderhealth.org/programs-services/support_services/wellness-center/clothing-market.html)
- <https://www.transclosethv.org/request> — Click “national directory” to download resource
- <https://www.secrethevan.com/free-pair-programme>
- <https://www.hitops.org/lgbtq/thecloset/>
- <https://transparentusa.org/resources-main/clothing/>
- <https://transparentusa.org/resources-main/clothing/>
- <https://www.consortium.lgbt/member-directory/the-tin-wardrobe/>

