

**SUPPORT YOUR LGBTQ2S CHILD.**

**THEY NEED FAMILY LOVE AND SUPPORT  
MORE THAN ANYTHING.**



**LGBTQ2S: LESBIAN. GAY. BISEXUAL. TRANSGENDER.  
QUESTIONING. AND TWO-SPIRIT**

# GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Our social and legal status as women and men is called **gender**. Gender identity is the way each of us *feels* about our gender. People whose gender identity conflicts with their body parts are called **transgender**.

Beyond just **man** and **woman**, **two-spirit** is a term for an alternative gender – a group recognized by many American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. It usually implies having one spirit with both masculine and feminine characteristics.

**Sexual orientation** is different from gender and gender identity. People who have sexual desires for the other gender are called **heterosexual** or **straight**. People who have sexual desires for their own gender are called **homosexual**, **gay**, or **lesbian**. People who have sexual desires for both genders are called **bisexual**. People who are unsure of their sexual orientation may call themselves **questioning**.

Altogether, these terms are sometimes combined to create the acronym LGBTQ2S – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-spirit.

## TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER

Many traditional cultures did not divide gender into two domains – man and woman. Genders were based on societal and cultural roles. Each individual had a place and a way to contribute. Two-spirit people were revered leaders, medicine people, and held special ceremonial roles. This way of seeing the world allowed people to be true to themselves and their feelings.

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

If you have a child or family member who is LGBTQ2S, you are not alone. One in four families has a family member who is LGBTQ2S. People experience a range of emotions when they first learn a loved one is LGBTQ2S – anger, sadness, concern, relief – and everything in between. These emotions are normal and many people going through this process have questions.

## NOW WHAT?

First, be open-minded. Coming out to friends and family can be difficult. By the time your loved one has built up the courage to come out, he or she may already have gone through the process of self-acceptance. Telling you is a sign of love, and desire for an open and honest relationship.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOUR LOVED ONE:

- The most important thing you can do is express unconditional love. Youth who come from supportive families are less likely to take risks.
- Next, take some time to educate yourself, so you can be a resource and support person for your loved one.
- Sex education at school isn't always inclusive. Help connect your loved one to accurate health information.
- Being LGBTQ2S can be tough – many feel bullied or alone. Be on the lookout for signs of depression, bullying, or harassment, and intervene if needed.

## RESOURCES

- Get connected to other families: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
- Learn more at We R Native: [www.wernative.org](http://www.wernative.org)