

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN...

Transgender and Nonbinary Advocacy - Part 1

Additional resources:



WHY NEEDED?

Close to 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have already been introduced in 2023. Laws targeting transgender people send a message that transgender people are not worthy of equal treatment, resulting in a rise in violence against transgender people. In an effort to ensure that all our children are safe and that we are speaking up for the rights of all children, here are some ways you can respond to misinformed comments you may hear about transgender and/or nonbinary people.

** PLEASE NOTE: Some nonbinary folks do consider themselves transgender, and others don't. For the sake of space, I used "trans" as short-hand for transgender and "enby" for nonbinary. Not all nonbinary people are comfortable with "enby," and it's always best to use the individual's language for themself rather than making assumptions. Also, additional background information is given in this font and isn't intended to be part of the suggested response.*

1

"CHILDREN ARE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW WHETHER THEY ARE TRANS/ENBY. THEIR BRAINS ARE STILL DEVELOPING AND YOU'RE JUST GOING TO CONFUSE THEM."

- Interesting. When did you know that you were a girl/boy?
- We don't question whether kids know they're a (cis) boy or girl, why is it different with trans and enby kids?
- 90% of the brain is developed by the time children are 5. The part of the brain that is still developing is the prefrontal cortex, which controls executive functioning. Younger kids are actually better equipped to be themselves b/c they're less inhibited.
- Studies show that most children can easily label themselves as either a boy or a girl by their 3rd birthday and by age four most children have a stable sense of their gender identity (they just may not have the language or skills to communicate it yet). This is the same for transgender and non-transgender kids.

"CHILDREN TRANSITIONING ISN'T SAFE"

- What does transitioning mean to you?

There are many ways to transition and it depends on the person! There's social transitioning (ex. using different pronouns), physical transitioning (ex. chest binding or padding), medical transitioning (ex. gender affirming hormone therapy) and legal transitioning (ex. changing name and/or gender markers on driver's license). Transitioning is NOT a requirement for being transgender or nonbinary. However, most people saying this comment are referring to medical transitioning.

- Puberty blockers have been used safely for many decades to treat precocious puberty.
- Children aren't getting surgeries. Irreversible genital surgeries cannot be carried out until the individual is of legal age to consent to any procedure.
- Studies show that transitioning actually saves lives since it decreases suicidality and gender dysphoria. The younger a trans/enby person is affirmed for their gender, the better the mental health outcomes for that person.

2

3

"BEING TRANSGENDER OR NONBINARY IS JUST A TREND."

- Tell me more about that. How do you know it's a trend?
(If they mean the increased numbers and/or visibility of trans/enby people...):
- I actually think it's b/c our society is becoming more accepting of trans/enby people and they have gender affirming language to use. There was a similar increase in people who identified as writing with their left hand when that stopped being pathologized, as well.
- Being transgender or nonbinary isn't new. Transgender people have been around for many centuries and across many different cultures.

"PEOPLE DETRANSITION AND REGRET IT, WHICH JUST PROVES THAT WE SHOULDN'T LET CHILDREN TRANSITION."

Refer to response for #2 to clarify what they mean by 'transition'. If it's about surgery, you can use one of the following responses...

- Yes, some people do regret it. But the percentage is very low, about 1%.
- Did you know that most people (over 80%) regret transitioning because of external factors, like increased harassment or pressure from family? Seems like the solution is to have more affirming environments, not limiting access to gender affirming care.
- Did you know that many more people regret having cosmetic surgery than have regretted transitioning? Does that mean we should also ban cosmetic surgery?

(65% regret it and only 28% are happy with it as compared to the 1% of people who regret transitioning and 99% who are happy)

- I think we need to be much more concerned about the suicide attempt rate of over 40% for trans/enby youth who aren't affirmed than the small percentage of trans/enby people who regret transitioning.

4

"GENDER IDENTITY ISN'T AN APPROPRIATE TOPIC TO DISCUSS IN SCHOOLS. STOP SEXUALIZING KIDS."

- How does affirming diverse gender identities sexualize kids?
- Whether someone identifies as a cis-boy or girl, transgender, or nonbinary has nothing to do with sexuality. Gender identity actually has more to do with the brain than any other part of the body.

Sex is who you go to bed with, gender is who you go to bed as.

5

- Gender identity is already discussed in schools; for example, children's books often identify whether the character is a boy or girl. It sounds like you have an issue with diverse gender identities being discussed, not gender identity itself.
- To acknowledge the existence of trans/enby identities is to recognize the humanity in trans/enby kids so that they feel seen. Studies show that having an affirming school environment greatly reduces the suicide rate in trans/enby youth. Therefore, discussing the full spectrum of gender identities in schools actually saves lives.
- Learning that there are a variety of gender identities doesn't mean they're being told to identify differently; it just means they learn to respect differences between people. Learning about something doesn't 'turn' people into a different gender.

DEFINITIONS:

Transgender - Gender identity doesn't correspond to the sex they were designated at birth.

Non-binary - Gender identity that doesn't conform to the male/female binary.

Cis - Gender identity corresponds to the sex they were designated at birth.

SOURCES:

Schuyler Bailar - [Pink MantaRay](#), - TRANS ACTIVISM & YOU

Human Rights Campaign - [Myths and Facts: Battling](#)

[Disinformation About Transgender Rights](#)

Vox - [Transgender People: 10 Common Myths](#)

National Education Association - [Why pronouns matter](#)