

FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS: SUPPORTING 2SLGBTQIA+ YOUTH



01.

Start with Listening and Believing

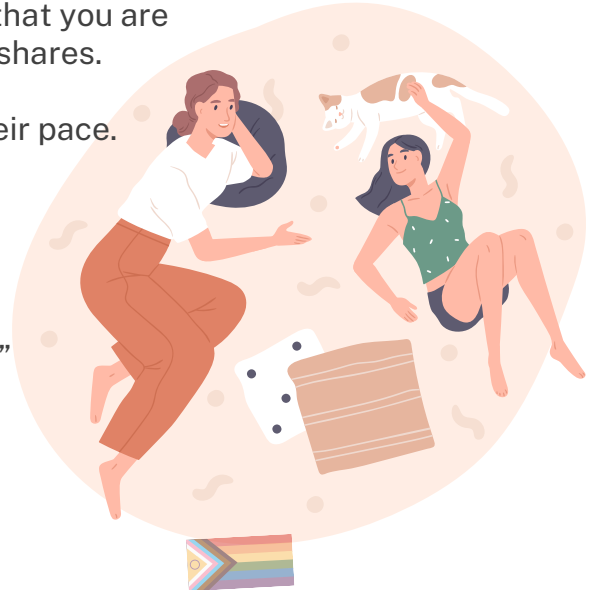
The first and most important steps are showing that you are present, listening, and believing what your child shares.

What can this look like?

- Sit without interrupting; let them share at their pace.
- Say things like:
 - “Thank you for telling me.”
 - “I believe you.”
 - “I’m always here for you.”

What does it not look like?

- Responding with fear, denial, or trying to “fix” anything.
- Do not say things like:
 - “Are you sure?”
 - “This is going to make your life so hard.”
 - “Why would you choose this?”
 - “It’s just a phase.”
 - “You can’t be that way in this house.”



02.

Use Their Name and Pronouns Consistently



Using a young person’s chosen name and pronouns is one of the simplest and most powerful forms of affirmation. It’s not a trend, a phase that you need to “manage,” or something that will make them trans or queer. **It’s a basic act of care.**

Affirming pronouns:

1. Strengthens Your Relationships
2. Reduces Depression, Anxiety, and Suicide Risk
3. Helps Youth Build Self-Esteem
4. Supports Healthy Identity Development

03.

Create an Affirming Environment at Home

Small daily actions make a big difference. Show your child you love them just as they are.

- Have inclusive books, shows, or media available (read and watch them together even!)
- Avoid gender-policing (“boys don’t wear that,” etc.)
- Make your home a no-homophobia/no-transphobia zone. This includes from relatives! Make home their escape from this.
- Ask open questions “How can I make our home feel safer or more comfortable for you?”
- Display small visible signs of affirmation (pride stickers, pins, etc.)



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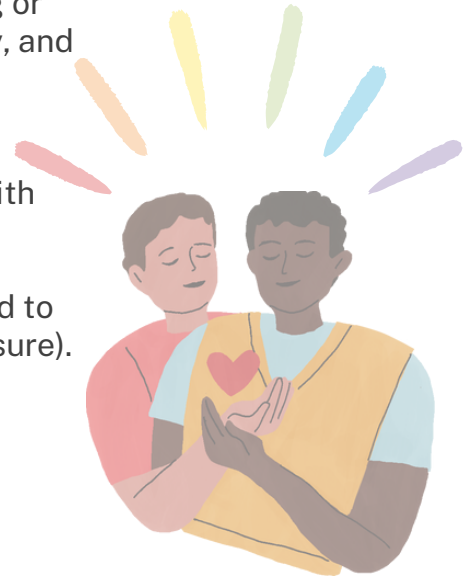
04.

Let Them Lead Their Coming Out Journey

Outing a young person before they're ready can be harmful! Coming out is a personal and ongoing process. Rushing or pressuring a child or youth can increase stress, anxiety, and risk of harm.

How to Support Safely:

- Ask permission and offer choice.
- Respect privacy (don't share your child's identity with family, teachers, or friends without their consent.)
- Help them plan if they want support.
- Normalize uncertainty (remind them they don't need to label or define everything right away if they are unsure).
- Create a safe space to talk openly.
- Support their choices, even if you feel nervous.
- Don't pressure them to define labels or identities.



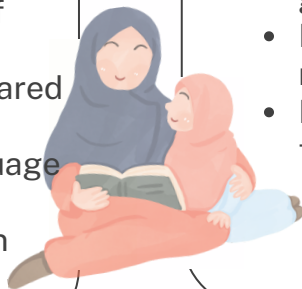
05.

Learn Together

Parents often worry they must know everything. It's ok that you don't! Willingness to learn and be curious is more important than expertise.

Do:

- Say it out loud ("I'm learning, and I want to understand").
- Use trusted resources (Out on the Shelf, Egale, Pflag, Rainbow Health Ontario).
- Let your child teach you (if they want to).
- Approach learning as a shared journey.
- Validate your child's language and labels.
- Admit when you have been wrong or don't know something.



06.

Support Their Community and Social Connections

Being connected to supportive communities is a major protective factor for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, supporting mental health, belonging, and resilience.

- Connect with queer-affirming programs.
- Encourage friendships with supportive peers.
- Support Two-Spirit youth in culturally grounded programs.
- Research local programs and resources.
- Encourage participation, but don't force.

**For more,
visit our website:
www.outontheshelf.com**