

Section 2:
YOUTH

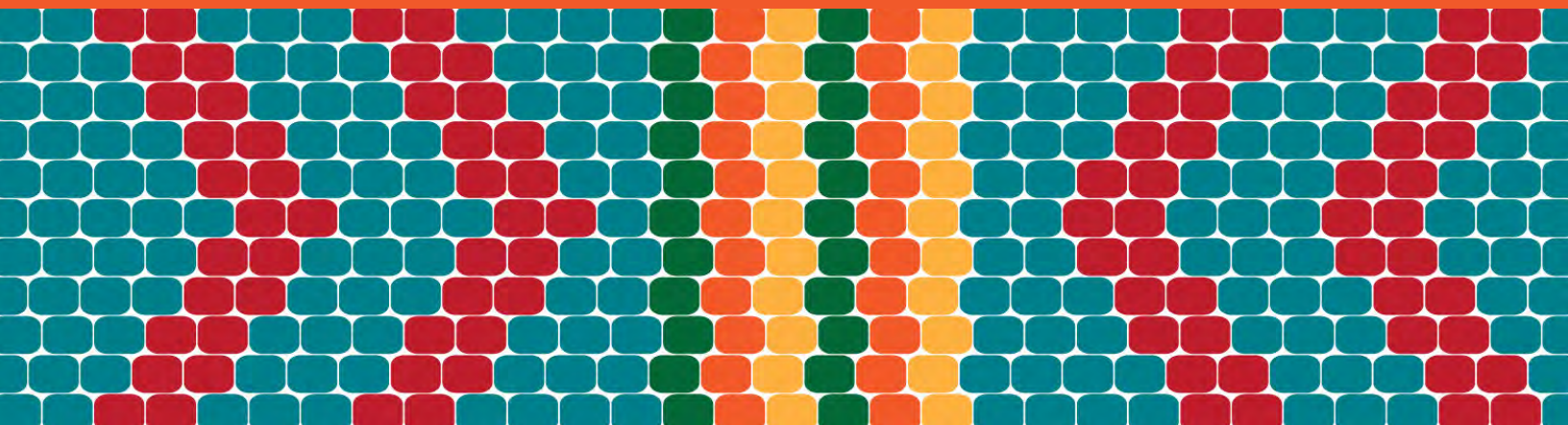




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YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

YOU ARE IN THIS WORLD FOR A REASON.

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE.

*Each person's
experience is unique
and beautiful.*

The advice and information in this Toolkit may not always apply to your life, your relatives, and your community. Follow your intuition as you read through this material, just as you trust yourself throughout your gender-affirming journey.



Before we get started:

If you or a friend needs any mental health support or is having a mental health crisis and/or suicidal thoughts, the following resources are available. They are all LGBTQ2S friendly!

TRANS LIFELINE: 877-565-8860

Crisis line staffed by transgender folks, for transgender folks; toll-free

THE TREVOR PROJECT: 866-488-7386

Crisis intervention and suicide prevention available 24/7 from counselors trained in supporting LGBTQ youth

CRISIS TEXT LINE: text HOME to 741741

Text at any time to start texting with a crisis counselor

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: Youth Perspectives and Stories

"I trust that my ancestors would still call me magic."

Arielle Twist

Two-Spirit writer and sex educator from George Gordon First Nation, Saskatchewan

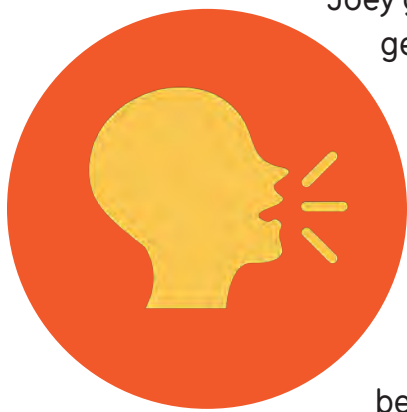
"I feel like I am really part of the circle, like I belong to something bigger...things seemed to make sense once I found the Two-Spirit community. It was and is healing. Two-Spirit is healing."

Dr. Alexandria Wilson

Two-Spirit professor from Opaskwayak Cree Nation

During the creation of this Toolkit, we had the opportunity to speak with a young person who was excited to share their gender journey. Some aspects of their story, including their name, have been changed to keep their identity anonymous. We do not claim to own their experience or mean to trivialize their rich journey. Instead, we hope to share their story so that you can read through it and gain support and comfort through a peer's lived experience.

Joey's Story



Joey grew up on a reservation in the Pacific Northwest. Early on in his gender-affirming journey, Joey isolated himself and hid his gender identity because on the reservation, "you're kind of family with everyone." He was worried about how people might react to his new identity as transmasculine and wasn't sure whom to tell first. Once he found the words to describe his identity and was able to say them to himself, it took Joey about one year to share his identity with others. He first began to socially transition at school with friends because that was the most comfortable. Once Joey became more confident and certain of his identity,

he slowly shared his identity with his teachers and other friends. Over time he felt better about telling his parents and relatives, and so he was able to share his identity with them. "Everyone I've known that I've told still love me. They still respect me. That's never changed."

Finding a therapist really helped Joey along his journey. "If you can get a therapist, I definitely encourage you to do that. Do not just settle. Find a

therapist for you. If you do have to settle, make sure your therapist understands you. And if you can't get a therapist, I would talk to a school counselor."

"Talk to them as often as you can, even if it's just little conversations or if you saw something that was absolutely ridiculous but made you laugh... they can help you get through your current tough situation."

Great friends helped along Joey's journey too. "Talk to them as often as you can, even if it's just little conversations or if you saw something that was absolutely ridiculous but made you laugh...they can help you get through your current tough situation."

"Everyone I've known that I've told still love me. They still respect me. That's never changed."

"Being Native is a really big part of who I am."

It took Joey a long time to realize that all of these people were always there for him. He encourages others to find those supports and to trust in them. Joey also shared how his culture and traditions are related to his identity. "Being Native is a really big part of who I am." Growing up, Joey regularly participated in Pow Wows and ceremonies that separated boys and girls. These events contributed to how he now understands himself and his role in his community.

Throughout his journey, Joey also found it helpful to reach out to community and tribal members. Joey hasn't yet been able to find any information recorded in his tribal language related to Two-Spirit people. Even so, he has been able to talk with his elders and community members about traditional perspectives related to gender. He has found even more loving support through this process.

There were definitely moments when Joey felt unsure, alone, and upset. These feelings were especially present during the time he was keeping his identity to himself. In those moments, to get through the tough times, he kept thinking about the little things that he enjoyed. He thought about what he would miss out on if he left or tried to change who he was.

Today, Joey attends college at a tribal affiliated university, and is passionate about helping others. He is a great example of the great things that can happen when you trust yourself and love yourself along your gender-affirming journey.

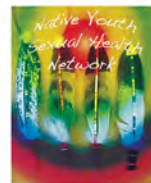
The Native Youth Sexual Health Network
Healthy Sexuality and Fighting Homophobia
Native Youth Photography Project
www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com



**I AM
PROUD
TO BE TWO
SPIRIT**



The Native Youth Sexual Health Network
Healthy Sexuality and Fighting Homophobia
Native Youth Photography Project
www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com



**THIS IS OUR
SISTER,
DON'T MESS**



YOU ARE NOT ALONE: Native traditions and role models

Do my ancestors celebrate me?

YES!

Native traditions have honored Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming relatives for their commitment to serving the community!

“My worldview is the earth. It’s the sky. It’s the animals. It’s trees. It’s the elements of the world, of the earth and why they come to us and what we learn from them.”

– Two-Spirit First Nations member

Everyone has a unique journey towards gender acceptance and affirmation. An important part of this journey is embracing your true self. Think about who you are and why you love yourself so you can share this with others. Many Two-Spirit and transgender individuals feel that this leads to “coming in” rather than “coming out” as a new individual. Be yourself and embrace your journey, rather than trying to fit into a pre-existing identity or label.

“We become self-actualized when we become what we’ve always been...They are just being, that is the way the Great Mystery made them. They come out in to this world like that. And they are living their lives...”

– Two-Spirit individual

By embracing who you were meant to be, you can fill important roles in your community as an empowered transgender or Two-Spirit individual. You can share your gifts with others and make your ancestors and community proud.

How could your ancestors not celebrate you?

Who can I look up to?

Your identity is complex and develops over time.

Reading stories and listening to experiences of Native transgender and Two-Spirit activists from different nations may help you find inspiration in reclaiming and embracing your own identity. Talking with your tribal elders, relatives, and other transgender or Two-Spirit people through online support groups or talking circles can also be helpful.

These interactions draw upon your strengths and the strengths of your ancestors to build your confidence and self-esteem. They can also help you better understand the unique resilience found among AI/AN communities, especially among transgender and Two-Spirit individuals.

The following Indigenous individuals identify as LGBTQ2S. Their stories, experiences, & dreams are healing medicine.

- Geo Neptune (Passamaquoddy), artist
- Susan Allen (Lakota), politician
- Chrystos (Menominee), poet, artist, & activist
- Beth Brant (Mohawk), writer & activist
- Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee), writer & educator
- Felipe Rose (Lakota), musician & performer
- Shawnee Talbot (Mohawk, Six Nations Grande River), singer
- Jack Jackson (Navajo), Senator
- Trudie Jackson (Navajo), transgender advocate
- Howie Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), comedian
- Sharice Davis (Ho-Chunk), 1st Lesbian Native American in Congress
- Travis Goldtooth "Buffalo Barbie" (Dine, Navajo)
- Raven Heavy Runner (Pikunii Blackfeet), Two-Spirit advocate & social worker
- Hiram Calf Looking (Pikunii Blackfeet), Two-Spirit advocate, community & family educator

Cree physician Dr. Makokis could be another great role model for you to look up to. Dr. Makokis is Two-Spirit and cares for transgender patients!



[Learn more about Dr. Makokis in this video.](#)

[Read an article about Dr. Makokis here.](#)



Reminder: All URLs and references for resources in this Toolkit can be found on page 38.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: Common questions about sharing your identity with relatives, friends, and school



I am transgender and want to tell my friends and family, but I am not sure how to. I have felt like this for a while now, but I am finally feeling ready to share my identity with others. What should I do to prepare myself?

Hello there! This is a great question!

It is so great you are ready to share your gender identity with your friends and family. You are so brave! How and when you share your identity is unique to your special journey—it depends on your comfort, readiness, and safety in your environment. Taking things step by step and remembering to stay true to yourself will help you share your identity with others! ***This is who you were meant to be!***

The first thing you may want to think about is who you will tell first. Sometimes it can be easier to start sharing your identity with the people you know will support you no matter what. These may be your relatives, friends, team members, teachers, doctors, or religious or spiritual leaders. Sometimes the people who are closest to you (like your parents or siblings) are actually the hardest to tell, and that's okay too. Once you decide who you want to tell, you can start thinking about how you will tell them. There are a number of ways you can do this, and the choice is entirely yours. You can talk on the phone, send an e-mail, write a story, talk face to face...the list goes on and on. ***There is no right or wrong way to tell someone!***

If you choose to call someone on the phone or talk face to face, it might help to practice your conversation and think through what you will say. You might also want to think about how people may react, and how you will respond to them. Thinking through this can help you feel more confident before the discussion.

Timing and location are also important to think about when talking with your relatives. Is somewhere private better than around a lot of people? Does a weekend or weekday work better? What about during a ceremony or special event?

Next, ***prepare yourself for the range of reactions people may have.*** You should think about having a safety plan in place just in case your family takes some time to come around to what you share with them. This may mean planning to stay at a friend or auntie or uncle's home for a few

days. You might also want to think about your options for food, school, and transportation. What if someone responds negatively or gets upset? **A lot of times, negative reactions are not related to you or how someone feels about you.** A person may respond negatively because they feel surprised and may not know what to say. While you have been living with your feelings and identity for your entire life, the person you are telling is most likely learning something completely new about you. They may take some time to process and fully understand what you are sharing with them. They still love you and want the best for you but may need time to find the words to share these feelings with you. While you are waiting, try to find support from the other friends or mentors you thought about earlier.

One last piece of advice is to **think about connecting to traditional knowledge when sharing your identity.** Drawing on the strength of your ancestors might increase your self-confidence. Talking about tradition and ceremony can also help your family remember how ancestors have celebrated transgender and Two-Spirit people throughout time.

Remember to trust yourself no matter what and know that wherever you are on your journey it is yours to control. Embrace your identity and celebrate how far you have come along your journey! You are in this world for a reason!

Think about who you would like to tell first at school. Have you told anyone already? If you have already shared your identity with your parents or relatives, telling your friends might be a little easier since you have some practice. If you haven't told anyone yet, think about one person at school who you would feel comfortable telling today.

Telling this one person can help you build confidence and trust in the people who love and support you. This person can be a great start to your support system both in and out of school. Some ideas include a best friend, teacher, coach, or counselor who can help you through the journey and remind you of how great you are.

I want to share my gender identity with my classmates and teachers at school. Do you have any advice for me?



There is no rush to tell your entire school right away. Over time, the more people you tell, the easier it will be to talk about.

It is also okay if you don't want to label yourself as a specific identity or with a specific term.

This is your choice! If you do choose a label, think about how you'll explain it to your friends. If you identify as Two-Spirit for example, there may be individuals both within and outside of the Native community who do not fully understand what Two-Spirit means.

If you are worried about your safety at school, **there are laws to protect every student.** One law is called Title IX and is part of the Civil Rights Act. It helps ensure that each student is treated fairly and has an equal opportunity to learn. This law also protects from discrimination based on sex and gender. Many other regulations are state specific and can be found online. A great place to start learning more about your rights is the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#). This site also provides tips on how to talk to your school leadership and report violations.

You can also find support and advice on how to navigate school and relationships through school-based LGBTQ2S groups. Many schools have created LGBTQ2S groups to provide safe spaces on campus. There is no pressure to join, but these groups can help you identify people with similar experiences and interests. You can hear their stories and help support one another. If your school does not have an existing group, you may want to think about starting one with some friends or a trusted school advisor. Schools are obligated to support the formation of these groups through Title IX. Check out these websites and documents if you want some more information about sharing your identity at school and with friends. Your teachers might find these really helpful, too!



Resources:

- **Gender Matters for Native Youth**
A sexual education curriculum adapted for Native Youth
- **Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth**
For youth and teachers
- **Teaching Transgender Toolkit**
Resources for school educators who want to learn more about gender and how to create an inclusive school environment



**What happens
with bathrooms?
Can I use whichever
one I choose?**

This is another great question. **Each school is legally obligated to create a safe environment for students.** For many schools, this includes allowing students to use the bathroom of their choice. Each state may enforce this differently, and policies are constantly changing, so researching and sharing what you find with your school principal or leadership can be really helpful.

Being able to use a bathroom that is consistent with your gender identity is really important. Some schools cannot make all facilities gender-neutral, but they still need to make other options available for you to use. This is part of your rights. For example, schools can designate single stall or private use bathrooms as alternative options that may help you feel more comfortable.

Non-discrimination policies protect you from being excluded from sports, clubs, or extracurricular activities based on your gender identity. The specific team you will play on (sex assigned at birth or chosen sex) varies by state. Some states have passed regulations that prevent discrimination against transgender students who wish to play sports. For example, in Washington State, you can play on the team that matches your chosen gender identity and can switch teams as you prefer. Other states continue to require students to compete on teams that match the sex on a student's birth certificate, instead of the gender they live in every day. You can research your state's specific laws online.



**Does being
transgender or
Two-Spirit impact
my ability to play
sports?**



Resources:

- [Trans Athlete](#)
- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#)



I hear that some relatives go through something called a grief process. What does that mean?

I don't understand because I am still here and haven't changed. Why do they seem sad?

Hi there, thank you for sharing. Experiencing this sort of reaction can be really tough and confusing. You may feel like people are acting as if you aren't there.

"Watching people mourn the loss of you while you are standing right in front of them is a surreal experience that only someone who is transgender can truly understand." (Madison, 2017)



Your relatives may respond with a period of grief and mourning even if they accept and celebrate your chosen identity. **In these moments, remind yourself that your relatives love you and need time to process.**

They want to provide the best support for you and continue to love you. They may just need time to think about how they can do this best. Your relatives may also have a lot of questions that they don't know how to ask yet. Over time, they will find the words.

This can be an uncomfortable experience and may cause you to feel sad or alone. In these moments, take a step back, and think about your other interests and skills that make you who you are. **Focus on your strengths. Think about what you are passionate about, and what your goals are for the future. Think about all the little things you enjoy. No matter what, you deserve to be here and make a difference in this world. You are in this world for a reason.** It may also be helpful to reach out to the people you've identified as your support system, or reach out to other LGBTQ2S students or community members for guidance.

In time, the grieving process will pass, and your relatives will be better able to express their feelings to you. They will be able to fully share their excitement with you and embrace your identity and spirit.



I haven't told my romantic partner that I am transgender yet. I am worried they will want to break up with me when they find out. Do you have any advice?

Hey there, Thank you for sharing! It is great to hear that you are living as your true, authentic self, and want to share that with your partner.

There are two important things to remember when sharing your identity with a romantic partner: self-compassion and safety.

First things first—**love yourself!** Treating yourself with compassion can be really powerful. It can help you remember that you are in charge of your journey. Can you love or treat yourself the way your closest friend or loving family member, mentor, or even pet treats you? Even though making your partner happy may seem like the most important thing sometimes, you need to remember to take care of yourself first. Loving yourself and treating yourself with compassion can be comforting and empowering as you progress along your journey. Who you are as a person is more important than how you identify or what body parts you have! Also remember that **you are loved by your family, friends, and community**, even when things may seem rocky in your relationship.

On to the second point: **safety**. Since we are talking about love, there are certain ways a loving partner should act in a relationship. A partner should:

- treat you with love, compassion, and respect.
- empower you to be your true self...your best self.
- encourage and support you through great times and tough times.
- celebrate your identity.
- inspire you to love yourself more.

With that said, your partner should love you and celebrate your identity when you share it when them. It may take them time to understand, and they may have a lot of questions, but they should continue to support you and respect you. Talking through your journey and feelings with a partner may help.

If your partner does not respect you after sharing your journey and identity with them, you should think about breaking up. You cannot depend on this person to love you if they cannot respect you and your journey.

You are worth it, and you deserve to be in a relationship that makes you feel secure, comfortable, and loved. You should always feel safe in your relationship—physically, mentally, and emotionally. If you have concerns about your partner or safety in your relationship, or even if you just have a weird feeling in your gut, reach out to people who you trust so they can help you get the appropriate help.

These conversations can be tough. Know that if you stay true to yourself and love yourself, things will fall into place.



People keep asking me if I am "certain" about my gender identity. Do you have any advice?

This is a great question. You do not need to be 100% certain as you progress along your journey. **Only you can know who you are.** If you cannot find something to describe you, or a word that describes how you want to show who you are, that's okay too. **You are not defined by a word.**

If you have questions and doubts as you explore your identity, remember to stay true to yourself. Take the time to think about how you see yourself, and how you want to be seen. Questions and doubts are a natural part of growing up—growing up is a time for exploration.

"I was 15 or 16 when I first came out and I wasn't 100% certain. And it's okay to not be so certain, because you are so young...for me, 15/16 wasn't that long ago. It feels like an entire lifetime ago that I had all those doubts of me being trans, but now I am 6 months post-op, two and a half years on testosterone, and I've never been so happy with my body and how I perceive it."

- Trans youth



TWO SPIRIT LOVED & ACCEPTED

#WENEEDYOUHERE



PREVENT SUICIDE.

TO GIVE HELP OR GET HELP:

- CALL THE TREVOR LIFELINE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH AT **1.866.488.7386**
- CALL THE SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE AT **1.800.273.8255**
- TEXT **"START" TO 741741** TO CHAT VIA TEXT MESSAGE
- VISIT **WWW.WERNATIVE.ORG** TO LEARN ABOUT SUICIDE SIGNS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES
- TALK TO TRUSTED ELDERLY, HEALERS, FRIENDS, FAMILY MEMBERS OR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



THRIVE



LGBTQ LOVED & ACCEPTED

#WENEEDYOUHERE



PREVENT SUICIDE.

TO GIVE HELP OR GET HELP:

- CALL THE TREVOR LIFELINE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH AT **1.866.488.7386**
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THRIVE

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE:

Interacting with health providers and primary care

It may not always be easy to find a healthcare provider who has experience working with transgender and Two-Spirit youth. To advocate for yourself as a patient, it is important to know what to expect from health providers. Learning about treatment options can also help you gain independence and ask for the best care possible.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION with a provider

When you meet with a provider, you can a) wait for the provider to take the lead or b) share your pronouns and chosen name at the beginning of the encounter, when you introduce yourself. Volunteering your pronouns right away may feel awkward, and correcting a provider's mistake can be uncomfortable, but doing so will help you feel better respected. With time, this will become easier. ***You are a gift from the Creator. You should be treated like one.***

If the staff or providers treat you in any way that makes you feel uncomfortable, you should look into choosing other providers. You can use the **resources listed in the families and relatives section**, or speak to a trusted adult who can help you find other providers. If seeing someone else is not an option, you can show your current provider the materials in this Toolkit so that they can become more aware of your specific needs. What's important is that a provider is willing to admit what they don't know and work to learn more about how they can best help you. They also should make you feel comfortable and be someone you can trust.

PRIMARY CARE

It is important that you trust your health provider and that you are able to tell them your full history. Your history includes what illnesses you have experienced, medicines you have taken, surgeries you have had, or mental health issues you've dealt with. Other information such as where you live, who you live with, and where you work are also important. If your provider knows what has happened to you in the past, they can better help you today and into the future.

PRIMARY CARE (continued)

Some other important things to discuss with your primary care physician include:

- Safe sex practices
- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Mental health
- Physical activity
- Diet
- Heart health
- Cancer risk factors

You don't have to talk about these all at once, and your doctor will know to ask you these questions—you don't need to memorize anything. Some medications used to block puberty or help hormonally transition may impact your health, so it is important to keep talking with your health team.

It may also be helpful to create a safety plan with your health team (or another trusted adult such as a teacher, counselor, coach, or family member). A safety plan is for moments when you are feeling sad or unsafe. Think about who you will talk to when you are feeling sad, where you will go if you feel unsafe, and coping methods you will use. Also keep in mind the resources available to you locally and nationally (**such as the Trans Lifeline and The Trevor Project listed below**) in case you need additional or emergency support.



Resources:

TRANS LIFELINE: 877-565-8860

Crisis line staffed by transgender folks, for transgender folks; toll-free

THE TREVOR PROJECT: 866-488-7386

Crisis intervention and suicide prevention available 24/7 from counselors trained in supporting LGBTQ youth

CRISIS TEXT LINE: text HOME to 741741

Text at any time to start texting with a crisis counselor

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE:

Roadmap for Transition

Are you ready for transition?

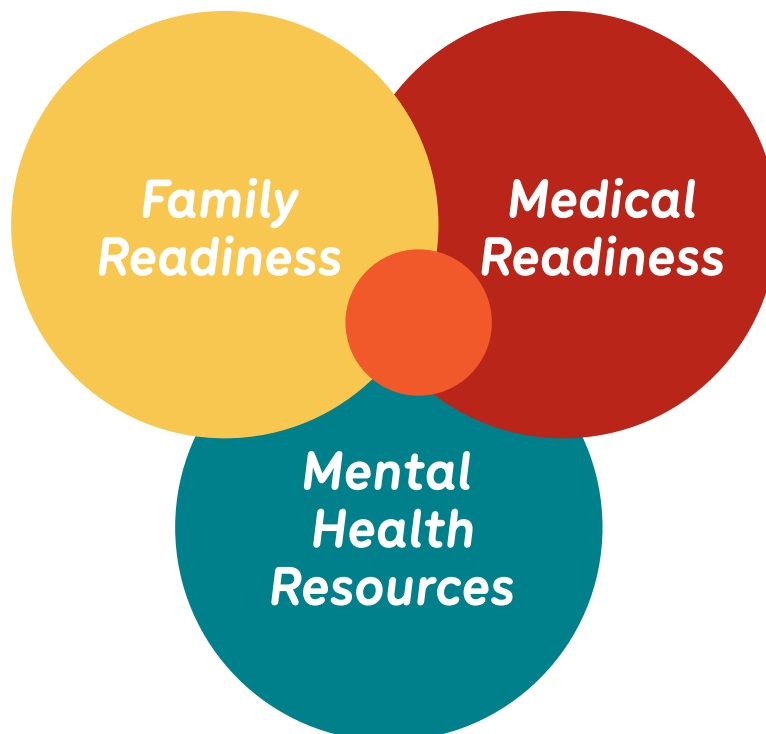
There is no right time or right way to transition, but there are a few things to think about before you proceed. Your mental health, medical readiness, and support from friends and relatives are all important. They can help you be successful along your gender-affirming journey and are especially important during transition (Figure 2).

You can be your best advocate by learning about what the transition process involves. Remember, the journey is different for each individual. Each of the medical services and transition choices discussed are completely optional. **Each person's journey is unique, and there are different paths to achieving each person's unique goals. These steps may vary from person to person and provider to provider.**

Some youth and families may decide they do not want to medically transition. Others may not be ready to begin gender-affirming treatments when they first visit a medical provider. If this applies to you, you can talk to your health provider about options to help you during this period of time. For example, mental health support and menstrual (period) suppression are services available if puberty blockers or cross-hormones are not an option at this time. These options can help you feel comfortable in your body and supported along your journey.

Talk to your health team about your options!

Figure 2:
Ready to transition?



Medical Transition Options: More information about puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgeries.

Note: The information provided is not official medical advice. Please talk more with your health provider to explore your options. Some of the information below is based on Seattle Children's Gender Clinic [handouts](#) on Puberty Blockers and Hormones.

Puberty Blockers

What is puberty?

- Puberty is the process the body goes through so it can become capable of making a baby (reproduction). It also helps the body and brain reach adult size and development. Puberty starts when your brain tells your pituitary gland (also in your brain) to start releasing hormones. This happens at different ages for different people.
- During puberty, your body increases the amount of certain puberty-related hormones (Luteinizing Hormone-LH and Follicle Stimulating Hormone-FSH). This causes your testicles to start producing testosterone or your ovaries to start producing estrogen. These hormones do not cause acne, pubic or armpit hair—those are caused by other hormones.

How do puberty blockers work?

Puberty blockers cause your body to stop releasing puberty hormones. This is like hitting a 'pause button' on puberty. Puberty blockers will not stop pubic or armpit hair from growing or improve acne. Blockers will only make a difference for the changes that make you look female or male. For example, in bodies with ovaries, breast size may get smaller if breasts have already started to develop. In bodies with testicles, testicle size may decrease, and penis growth will be stopped.

What will happen if I start puberty blockers late in puberty?

If puberty blockers are started late in puberty, they cannot reverse most changes that have already happened. However, puberty blockers can stop any further puberty changes.

Are puberty blockers permanent?

Puberty blockers are not permanent. If you decide to stop puberty blockers and do not start cross-sex hormones, your body will start going through puberty associated with your sex at birth. You can stop the puberty blockers at any time (with the help of your provider).

How long will it take for blockers to start working?

It can take several months for puberty blockers to start working. Everyone's body is a little different, so it is hard to know how quickly your body will respond. In the beginning, your body may actually show more signs of puberty. These will lessen as you continue to take the blockers.

What are the different types of puberty blockers?

- **Lupron or Leuprolide:** Medication given every 3 months in the clinic as a shot.
- **Histrelin:** This medication comes in a little plastic rod that is placed under the skin in your upper arm. It can work from 1-2 years and will need to be replaced at that time. The insertion and removal can be done in a clinic.

How will my body change with puberty blockers?

- Puberty changes that your body would have gone through without medications will not occur.
- You will not begin to develop physical changes related to your gender identity until you begin cross-sex hormones (if physical transition is something you are interested in).

Will I feel pain?

- Lupron injections are given in your arm, leg, or bottom. The area where you get the shot may be sore for 1-2 days after the injection. Using numbing cream (topical lidocaine) before your injection can reduce pain.
- Before the Histrelin implant is inserted into your arm, you will receive an injection to numb the upper arm so you will not feel any pain with insertion. You may be sore for 2 days after the procedure.
- You may take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to decrease the pain from injection or implant. Check in with your health provider before beginning medication.

What are the risks of puberty blockers?

Puberty blockers are relatively new, so we do not have a complete understanding of long-term risks. We do know about some of the short-term risks.

- **Bone health:** Because bones are built during puberty, blocking puberty can cause your bones to be weaker (lower bone density). This risk can go away if you stop the puberty blockers or start cross-hormone therapy but is still important to think about. To help prevent injuries while taking blockers, you can take calcium and vitamin D supplements (ask your health provider), and do weight bearing exercises like walking, jumping, and weight lifting. These can help make your bones stronger. Your doctor may check your bone health with something called a DEXA scan. This takes a picture of your bones and helps to see how you are growing before you start treatment. It can also help check your bones during treatment.
- **Fertility:** Puberty blockers do not impact fertility or your chance of having a baby in the future when taken alone (without cross-sex hormones). Please see below for more information.

Are puberty blockers right for me?

- The decision to use puberty blockers is an individual decision. It is important to think about the benefits and risks and to ask all questions you may have.
- Puberty blockers can give you time to make decisions about your gender transition that are more permanent, like starting cross-sex hormones. Blocking puberty can help your body to develop in a way that matches your chosen gender identity.

Are puberty blockers right for me? (continued)

- Puberty blockers are like a 'pause button' on the puberty that does not match your gender identity. This is helpful because puberty can be distressing for many transgender people.
- For example, a transgender female (MTF) adolescent who took blockers to pause puberty was given time to reflect on her gender identity. She then made the decision to start cross-hormone therapy (estrogen). Because she took puberty blockers, she now has physical features that are indistinguishable from someone assigned female at birth.
- You may not have access to puberty blockers or doctors who prescribe them. However, learning about what is out there can help you be better informed and keep your options open. It can also help you to reach out to providers who may work in another community or on another reservation close by.

When is a good time to start taking puberty blockers?

- Most doctors will start you on puberty blockers once your body starts to show signs of puberty. Most of the time, this happens when bodies with testicles start to have increased testicle size and penis growth, and bodies with ovaries start to have breast changes.
- It is not safe to start puberty blockers before puberty. There are a few tests your doctor can run to confirm that your body has started the process of puberty.
- Working with a health team, when safe and available, from early on in your journey can be helpful. Scheduling some visits before you reach puberty can help you and your family build trust and get to know your options.

For how long can I take puberty blockers?

- Puberty blockers can be taken for any period of time until you decide you want to start cross-sex hormone treatment or resume the puberty of your sex assigned at birth. However, as listed above in the risks section (on page 24), there is a chance that your bone density will be lessened, causing weaker bones. For this reason, most providers will provide blockers for a maximum of 4-5 years, and many choose to limit it to 2-3 years.

Cross-sex hormones

If transitioning physically is part of your journey, the charts below may be helpful. Table 3 presents an overview of the hormone you would receive based on your gender identity. Unfortunately for non-binary patients, sex hormones are binary. Your healthcare team should be able to work with you to find a hormone dose that feels right for you and your identity. Table 4 describes the hormone treatments in more detail. Remember that this information is not official medical advice and choosing to medically transition is completely optional. Be sure to explore your individual options with your medical care team.

Cross-sex hormones (continued)

Table 3: Hormone overview

Cross-sex hormone	MTF	FTM
Estrogen	X	
Testosterone		X

Reminder:
 MTF = male to female
 FTM = female to male

Table 4: Hormonal treatment options and details

	MTF hormone treatment	FTM hormone treatment
Hormone function	Estrogen is produced in the ovaries and is responsible for breast development, genital growth, and distribution of body fat in biologic females.	Testosterone is produced in the testes and causes deep voice, body hair, facial hair, and a specific body shape.
Treatment form	17-beta-estradiol Most common: patch (transdermal) Other: pill (oral), injection	Most common: injections Other: patch (transdermal)
Treatment effects	<p>Body fat: Many individuals will experience redistribution of body fat away from the belly and towards the hips/buttocks in a "feminine pattern".</p> <p>Facial and body hair: Even with treatment, hair may not go away completely and may require hair removal treatments. If individuals undergo puberty suppression, facial and body hair are typically prevented.</p> <p>Voice: Estrogen has no direct change on voice. Puberty blockers are helpful to prevent voice changes that occur.</p>	<p>Body fat: Many individuals will experience redistribution of body fat towards the abdomen rather away from thighs and buttocks; described as a more "masculine pattern".</p> <p>Facial and body hair: Over time thicker and darker hair will grow, although beard growth may take up to a few years.</p> <p>Voice: Testosterone leads to deepening of voice; changes usually occur within one year of starting treatment.</p>

	MTF hormone treatment	FTM hormone treatment
<i>Treatment effects</i>	<p>Breast growth: Typical over 1-3 years along with nipple growth. However, breast size is often more related to family history than to hormone therapy.</p> <p>Erections: Erections decrease over time and may disappear completely. Sperm production decreases over time.</p> <p>Testicular size: Shrinkage of testicles occurs over time.</p>	<p>Menstruation: Individuals tend to stop getting a period within six months of starting treatment.</p> <p>Clitoral and vaginal changes: the clitoris enlarges and may become erect when stimulated; growth to around 1 inch; the vagina becomes dry and loses lubrication.</p> <p>Skin: Baseline acne may worsen as skin becomes more oily.</p> <p>Fertility: Testosterone typically prevents FTM individuals from becoming pregnant, but this is not definite. It is therefore necessary for FTM individuals to have access to appropriate forms of birth control and condoms to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infection.</p> <p>Emotions: Some patients report feeling emotionally unbalanced, irritable, and aggressive. These can usually be managed by your health provider, without stopping treatment.</p>



Watch these videos to learn more:

- **Masculizing hormone therapy**
- **Feminizing hormone therapy**

What are the risks of cross-sex hormones?

- The majority of changes caused by cross-sex hormones are irreversible.
- **MTF:** If hormone treatment is stopped, breast growth and decreased sperm production may be permanent. Other changes will disappear.
- **FTM:** Taking testosterone for a long period of time may increase the risk of certain cancers and heart disease.
- **Cross-sex hormones are relatively new.** This means there isn't a lot of existing research to fully understand long term effects of cross-sex hormones. Regular follow-up with your team of health providers is important to keep track of your health while receiving treatment.

What about shots?

- If your transition involves giving yourself shots, check out the following resources:



Resources:

- **Fenway Health Transgender Health Injection Guide**
- **Injection training videos from Dr. Kevin Hatfield at The Polyclinic in Washington State**
 1. "Subcutaneous Injection Training – Introduction"
 2. "Subcutaneous Injection Training - Injecting the Medication"

Fertility considerations

Kids of my own? What?!?! I am too young to think about that! Even though having kids of your own may seem far away, it is important to think about what your future family might look like before starting any gender-affirming medical treatment. There is a chance that cross-hormone treatment can change your fertility permanently. Talking about your options with your relatives, friends, health providers, and/or counselor can help you think about your options.

Some things to consider:

- Is having children something you could see in your future?
- Would you consider other options besides having biologic children (such as adoption)?
- Preservation (which means **storing** your eggs, embryos, or sperm) is expensive and currently not covered by insurance. What are your financial options?

Some things to consider (continued):

- Who can you speak to about your decision?
- Have you gone through puberty already? If you have not gone through puberty, there are different considerations. Speak to your health provider.

Table 5: Fertility preservation options

Transgender female (MTF)	Transgender male (FTM)
Sperm preservation	Oocyte cryopreservation (egg)
	Embryo cryopreservation

Other transition related questionsDo I have to think about birth control while I am receiving puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones for my medical transition?

If you are currently sexually active, you should continue to use barrier methods like condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infection. Even though you are on hormone treatment or puberty blockers, there is still a risk of pregnancy or getting your partner pregnant. You are also still at risk for sexually transmitted infections—use protection to avoid infection. [Here](#) are some options (you can also google search “ACOG birth control options” for this resource). ACOG is the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Do I need to see a mental health provider or receive therapy to medically transition?

Most health providers recommend connecting with a mental health professional who has experience working with gender expansive patients. They can provide helpful support before, during, and after your medical transition. Mental health providers can also help you talk through tough decisions and changes as you get older. They can also support your family as you go through those changes. If doctors or insurance companies need letters, your mental health provider can help you with those too.

What about surgery?

Some transgender or Two-Spirit individuals choose to have gender-affirming surgery as part of their journey.

Some states and some surgeons require that you must be 18 or older and have lived for 1-2 years as your chosen gender before you can have surgery.

Surgery can be expensive, and your insurance may not cover it, so it is important to talk to your provider and health team about your options. They can help you find the right surgeon and help you navigate the financial details involved.

There are a number of surgery options available. They are described below briefly. Remember, gender-affirming surgery is completely optional. If you are interested in surgery, talk to your health care team about your options and what works best for your journey. You can also read more about these [here](#).

- You may have heard about top surgery. Top surgery includes mastectomy (removal of breast tissue), chest reconstruction, or breast augmentation.
- You may have also heard about genital surgery types, including hysterectomy (removal of the uterus), salpingo-oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes), or orchiectomy (removal of the testes). Genital reconstructive surgeries are also related options.
- Voice surgeries and facial feminization procedures are also options.

YOU ARE IN THIS WORLD FOR A REASON: *Transition Fast Facts*

**96% overall
satisfaction with
transition**

**97%
satisfaction
rate following
hormone
therapy**

**94% of trans
people reported
improved quality
of life following
transition**

**96% of
transitioned
individuals report
increased sense
of well-being**

**96%
satisfaction
rate following
top surgery**

**90%
satisfaction
rate following
genital surgery**

**85% report
improved
emotional
stability**

YOU ARE IN THIS WORLD FOR A REASON:

Mindfulness and Meditation

Your journey as a transgender or Two-Spirit individual is unique. The journey is filled with many changes, emotions, and thoughts, so feeling overwhelmed is natural. You can use mindfulness as a tool to grow along your gender-affirming journey. There may also be times when you need to reach out to others for support, and that is okay too.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is medicine. Mindfulness is about living in the present and accepting where you are in your journey. It can give you space to think about the difficulties you are having and reflect on how they fit into the bigger picture. Mindfulness can be centering because it helps you recognize how your personal journey is related to your ancestors and their journeys. ***Taking time to honor and care for your spiritual and emotional self is important to staying healthy.***

Mindfulness also involves ***loving yourself and giving yourself compassion.*** This can help you find strength as you progress on your journey. Mindfulness is also a way for you to build up your resilience—how well you adapt to and overcome changes, challenges, and stress (Mayo Clinic 2018). Resilience can help you trust more in your journey.

What are some ways to practice mindfulness?

Meditation and poetry! Below are some **meditations** that you can do on your own, with family members, or with friends. You can read through the text or listen to some of the audio files or videos whenever you have the time. Most of them are short and easy to do in less than 15 minutes!



Meditations

- **'Compassionate Friend' adapted meditation.**
This meditation is loved by teens!
- **"It gets better: the radical path of befriending ourselves for teens"**
- **Guided meditations for personal use**
Related to self-compassion, mindfulness
- **Calm Harm App**
An interactive app for youth that can help you stay safe and manage self-harm using breathing and relaxation techniques.
- **Video about mindfulness, shared through a story**

Reading **poems** can also help you practice mindfulness. When you read poetry, your creativity begins to flow, and your mind can start to form new connections between thoughts and ideas. This may help you remain present in the moment and reflect on your journey.

The Center for Mindfulness at UC San Diego shares a number of poems [online](#) that many youth and adults find helpful for meditation. You can also find poems written by Native American individuals from different nations [here](#). Chrystos (Menominee), Storme Webber (Alutiiq/Black/Choctaw), and Fabian Romero (Purepécha) are also inspirational Indigenous poets to check out!

Other techniques for mindfulness and relaxation include: going for a walk, hiking, listening to music, going fishing, swimming, writing in a journal, being in nature, and using some breathing techniques. Breathing deeply when you are stressed can help you lessen some of your body's reactions to stress. You can learn more about these strategies and others on [WeRNative](#).

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE: *Your Sexual Health*

Transgender and gender expansive youth face increased risk when it comes to sexual health, but there are lots of ways you can protect yourself and your friends. ***You are a gift from the Creator. Draw upon your strengths and knowledge to overcome these risks.***



General sexual health and wellness resources

- **"Safer Sex for Trans Bodies"**
Sexual health, wellness, and relationship exploration
- **Online resources**
For learning more about contraception, studies about sexual risk factors and ways to overcome them, and PDFs you can give to your teachers and health providers
- **"Trans Youth Sexual Health Booklet"**



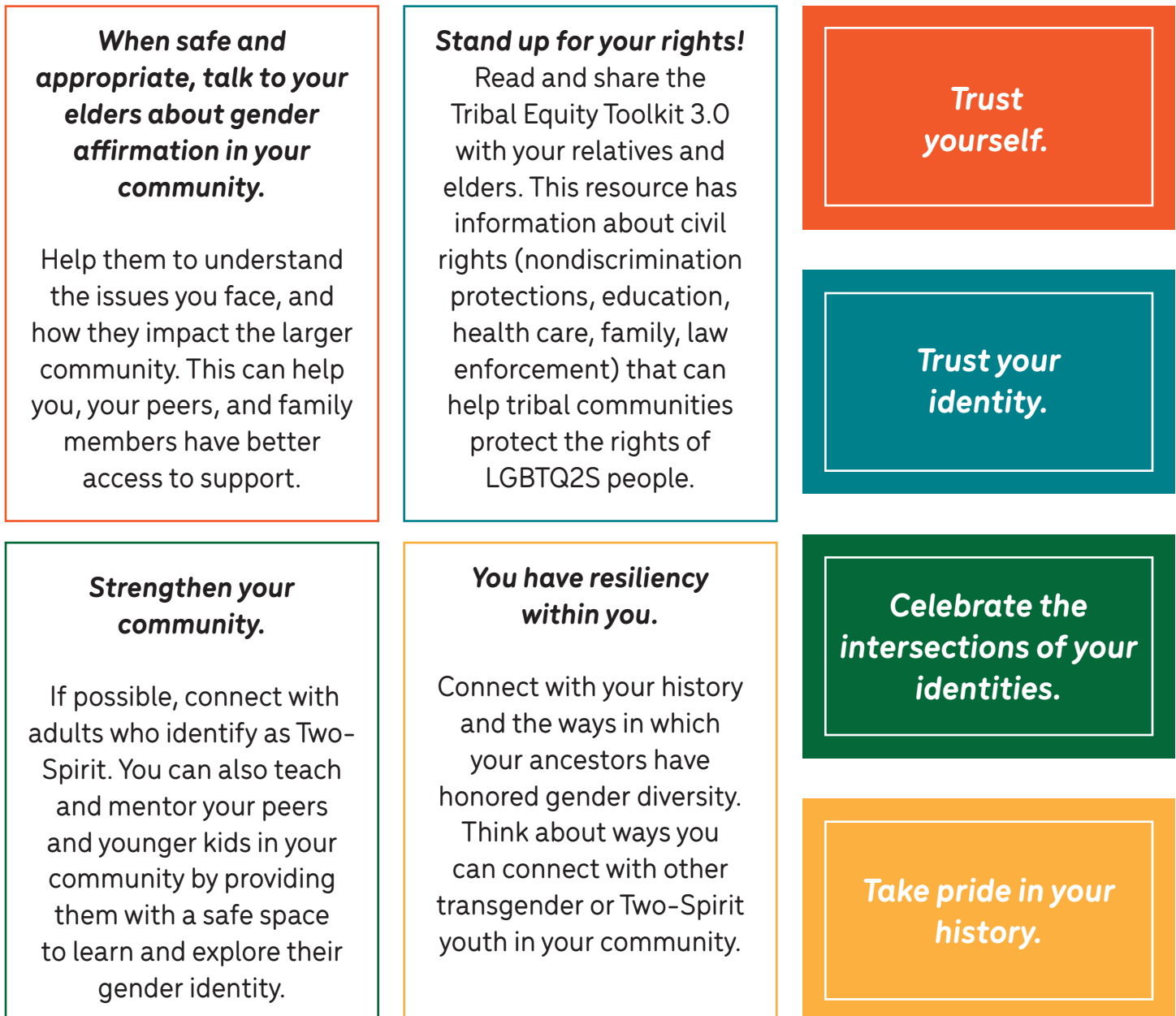
Safer sex guides by identity:

- **Trans Men: "Primed2: A Sex Guide for Trans Men into Men"**
How to have safe sex, prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and find safe sex
- **Trans Women: "Brazen 2.0: Trans Women's Safer Sex Guide"**

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE: Your Community

As a young person, you play an important role in creating new norms and raising new ideas in your community. This can be as simple as talking to your friends and classmates about gender and gender identity. Figure 4 suggests some other ways you can get connected in your community.

Figure 4: Community Connections and Resilience



It can be tough at times to feel fully immersed in your culture and traditions. For example, AI/AN youth and adults who identify as transgender or Two-Spirit may feel uncomfortable participating in Pow Wows or smoke ceremonies with categories for either men or women. Regalia choice and presentation at these events can also cause discomfort. In these situations, you can ask event leadership if it would be possible to enter into a category of your choosing. You can also speak to trusted community members who may be able to connect you with other transgender or Two-Spirit friendly events.

You can also look for opportunities to engage in the larger Two-Spirit community through Two-Spirit gatherings and specific Pow Wow events. ***"There is magic at the Two-Spirit Pow Wow. Our people feel safe to be themselves."*** (Wilbur 2018). These events create a space for individuals of all genders to celebrate both their gender identity and Native identity. Two-Spirit Pow Wows are setting the example for other Pow Wows to remove the gender category during events. You can find other Two-Spirit gatherings online or through connections with community members who also identify as Two-Spirit.



Two-Spirit specific Pow Wows:

- [Arizona](#)
- [Bay Area, San Francisco, CA](#)
- [Two-Spirit Pow Wow video](#)

Figure 5: Two-Spirit Person at Bay Area Pow Wow



Photo by:
Matika
Wilbur

Looking for other ways to get involved in your community and share your gender identity?

Art is another great way to share your identities! Do you like painting? Acting? Beading? Dancing? Making people laugh? Think about ways you can share your story and experiences with your community in a creative way. Expressing yourself through art can help you grow as a transgender or Two-Spirit community member. Art is a powerful form of medicine.

For example, Two-Spirit artist Ryan Young created the blanket in Figure 6 to express Two-Spirit struggles. **The crow comes from the Native story below:**

“The story goes that the crow was once very colorful and had a beautiful singing voice, but during a forest fire, it spent so much time trying to help the other animals that its colorful feathers became blackened with soot and its beautiful singing voice turned hoarse from the smoke... this story reflects the struggles and sacrifices made by Two-Spirit people to get to where they are today. The blanket mirrors the story, as one side features two brightly colored crows while the other side the two crows are all black.”

Figure 6: Two-Spirit Blanket



Photo credit: Nour Image, supplied by: Eight Generation

What about music?

Learn from Tony Enos, Cherokee and Two-Spirit activist, about how music has helped him embrace his identity.



[Learn more about Tony here.](#)

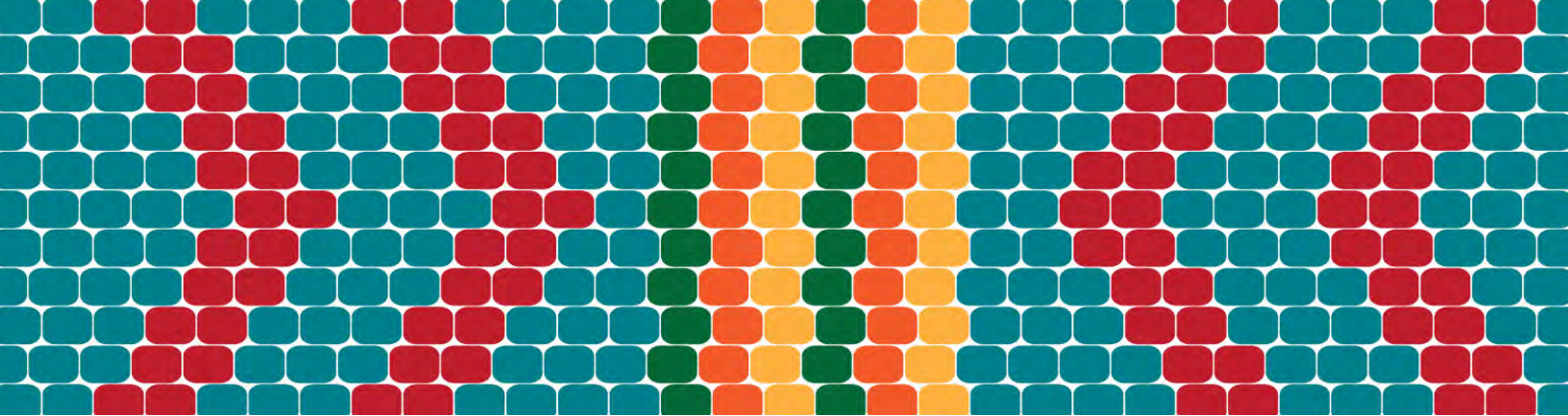
WEBSITE REFERENCES

Youth

- **Trans Lifeline** <https://www.translifeline.org/>
- **The Trevor Project**: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/#sm.0001mxuyq3aiud52pam2ib3sjuof>
- **Crisis Text Line**: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- **Learn more about Dr. Makokis**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSnvtjOG3cA>
- **Read an article about Dr. Makokis**: <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/a-cree-doctors-caring-approach-for-transgender-patients>
- **National Center for Transgender Equity**: <https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/schools>
- **Gender Matters for Native Youth**: <https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/curricula/gender-matters-for-native-youth>
- **Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth**: <http://www.safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Two-Spirited-Web-Booklet.pdf>
- **Teaching Transgender Toolkit**: <https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/features/serving-transgender-youth/sexual-health-and-transgender-youth>
- **Trans Athlete**: <https://www.transathlete.com/k-12>
- **ACLU**: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights>
- **Seattle Gender Clinic Handouts**: <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/gender-clinic/>
- **Masculizing hormone therapy video**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmjSEf2og1A&feature=youtu.be>
- **Feminizing hormone therapy video**: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_gdLCXKl5Y&feature=youtu.be
- **Fenway Health Transgender Injection Guide**: NEED LINK
- **Subcutaneous injection training: introduction**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzWs5LAWqPc>
- **Subcutaneous injection training: injecting the medicine**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkBuY4iMK7E>
- **Birth control options**: <https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Birth-Control-Especially-for-Teens?IsMobileSet=false>
- **Surgery options**: <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=guidelines-overview>
- **Compassionate Friend meditation**: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56df266a62cd94a042cacc75/t/593caf8015d5db6254c0610a/1497149313019/CompassionateFriend.pdf>
- **It Gets Better**: <https://www.lamarod.com/listen-1>
- **Guided meditations**: <https://centerformsc.org/practice-msc/guided-meditations-and-exercises/>
- **Calm Harm app**: <https://calmharm.co.uk/>
- **Mindfulness video**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss>
- **Mindfulness poems**: <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/resources/pages/poetry.aspx>
- **Native American poems**: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144560/native-american-poetry-and-culture>
- **WeRNative**: <https://www.wernative.org/>
- **Safer Sex for Trans Bodies**: <https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-foundation-and-whitman-walker-health-release-comprehensive-transge>
- **Sexual Health Resources**: <https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/features/serving-transgender-youth/sexual-health-and-transgender-youth>
- **Trans Youth Sexual Health Booklet**: <http://cdn0.genderedintelligence.co.uk/2012/11/17/17-14-04-GI-sexual-health-booklet.pdf>
- **Sex Guide for Trans Men**: <https://www.catie.ca/en/resources/primed-sex-guide-trans-men-men>
- **Sex Guide for Trans Women**: <http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/brazen>

Youth (continued)

- **Arizona Two-Spirit Pow Wow:** https://www.azcentral.com/picture-gallery/news/local/phoenix/2019/03/10/native-two-spirit-powwow-south-mountain-community-college-lgbtq/3119007002/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=amp&utm_campaign=gallery
- **Bay Area Two-Spirit Pow Wow:** <http://www.project562.com/blog/decolonizing-sexuality-at-the-largest-two-spirit-pow-wow-in-the-nation/>
- **Two-Spirit Pow Wow video:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=gjZAb01U3Ac
- **Learn more about Tony Enos:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=UoEARLAXhkA&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3HF5zLuVlDpPHta7Cj3xs1-ZetcOKirASvfzddcHbB6ss-s2CN5W6xhfg>



Crisis Hotlines

If you or a friend needs any mental health support or is having a mental health crisis and/or suicidal thoughts, the following resources are available. They are all LGBTQ2S friendly!

TRANS LIFELINE:

877-565-8860

Crisis line staffed by transgender folks, for transgender folks; toll-free

THE TREVOR PROJECT:

866-488-7386

Crisis intervention and suicide prevention available 24/7 from counselors trained in supporting LGBTQ youth

CRISIS TEXT LINE:

TEXT HOME TO 741741

Text at any time to start texting with a crisis counselor

