

# Good Queer News!

## How to Lead with Joy in Supporting Trans Kids

And celebrating a special anniversary!!

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MAY 7



Today is a special anniversary for me.

I know. I have a lot of anniversaries. But part of choosing joy for me is about seeing lots of pieces of my life as worth celebrating and finding many opportunities to reflect on how far I've come! I'll have as many parties as I like.

Today is the two year anniversary of the release of my book: *My Child is Trans, Now What? A Joy-Centered Approach to Support*.

To celebrate, I want to share some of my favorite strategies from the book as well as a little bit about how much my life has changed because of this book. If you've been around for a while or even if you're relatively new here, you probably know by now that joy is a very deeply held value of mine, and it's something that I bring very thoughtfully and strategically into everything that I do. That most certainly includes supporting trans youth.

For so many parents and families, I found that people were getting stuck on fear and anger and suicide statistics. The whole reason people were getting involved or stepping up as allies was because they didn't want their kids to kill themselves. Don't get me wrong, neither do I. But centering joy means supporting trans kids not just because of what I'm afraid of but because I want to see them become joyful, lovable, resilient, loved, safe, fulfilled, *trans adults*. Having something we are fighting for, something we are working to build, will always be more sustainable in the long term than just something we are trying to run away from.

Since I know attention spans are short and I want as many trans kids as possible to feel as safe as possible, we'll start with the strategies:

### **Number one: Celebrate the journey. Often.**

Mark the date of their coming out or their legal name change or their top surgery, and celebrate that date. Treating that date as worth remembering and worth putting effort into sends the message that you view

their journey as something good and beautiful. If they've just come out, What would it look like to honor that? Maybe they want to have a redo of a gendered ritual, like a bar mitzvah or a quinceanera. Maybe they want to host a gender repeal party or have the slumber party they always dreamed of being invited to.

Some of my friends celebrated the release with a cake. How crazy is this!!!!

**Number two: Make intentional efforts to make them feel seen.**

That means trying as a verb to get their name and pronouns right—the verb component of this being critical. I learned very quickly the difference between people who would say “I’m trying” just to get me to stop being upset, versus the people who were actually practicing and correcting themselves. Trying means effort! Two things can be true at once: you can give yourself grace for the truth that it can be very challenging to learn a new name and pronouns for someone, AND working towards getting it right matters *a lot*.

We can also help them feel seen beyond names and pronouns, like by having a formal family dress up dinner or they can wear clothes that make them feel affirmed, asking them what kind of compliments make them the happiest, or asking them directly, “how else can I make you feel seen?”

**Number three: Look at grief from a different lens.**

Often, when parents and families describe the grieving process, they go through when someone comes out as trans, a significant portion of this is grieving expectations. Reflect more deeply. How do you know that you had those things? How do you know that they're gone? I may not be my mom's little girl anymore, but our relationship is so much closer now that I've seen her prove that love is actually unconditional and that she's willing to go to bat for me when it isn't easy. **How might your relationships be deepened by this journey?** And finally,

**Number four: Don't let this journey be shaped by the negatives.**

Ultimately, life is one long story we are telling ourselves about the meaning of the various things that happen around us. If we choose only ever to think or talk about the bad news, about the problems to be solved, or the unsupportive family members, or the fears we have, those will become the entire story because it is the only story you are telling.

Take time to look for and sit with and celebrate the good news happening around you. When you're preparing for a family gathering, don't just ask what are we worried about, but also ask who do I think will surprise me the most today? Who will make the best effort on pronouns? Who will ask the best question? Who am I most grateful for? These kinds of reflections make space for us to tell ourselves a different story.

The challenges will exist either way, But we can and must choose to look for moments of peace and joy amid those challenges.