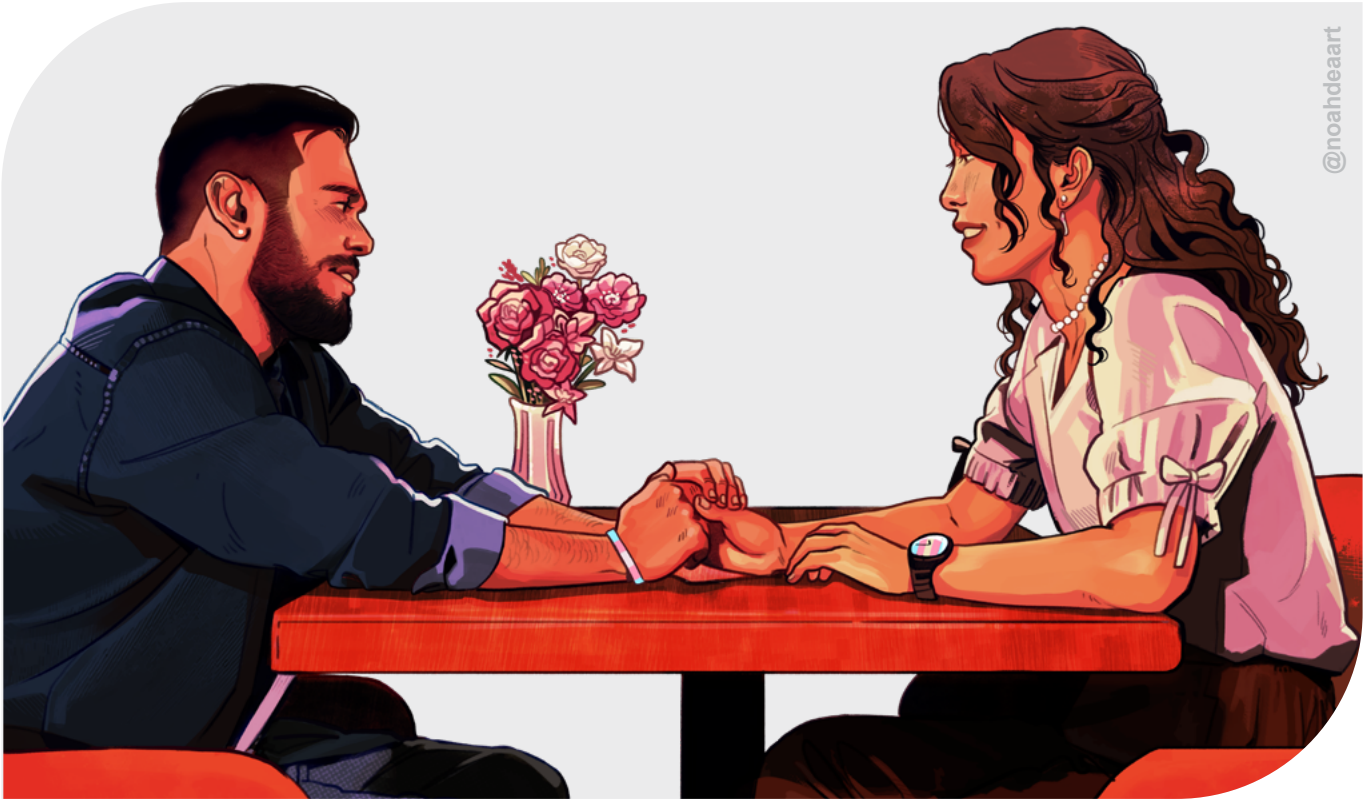


# Transfemme.com.au

INFORMATION FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF MEN  
WHO DATE TRANS WOMEN OR TRANS FEMININE PEOPLE



## Why is privacy important to trans women & their partners?

*This resource is for the friends and family of men who date trans women or trans feminine people\*, to help them respectfully support the privacy and safety of transgender people and their partners.*

### Summary

- Trans women have a right to privacy, and some may choose not to disclose their transgender history or experience.
- Some people are not supportive of the relationships between trans women and men.
- Transphobia can cause family relationships and friendships to break down.
- Some people might need support to change their attitudes to trans women and their partners.
- LGBTIQA+ family violence services can provide support when controlling, threatening or abusive behaviour is taking place.

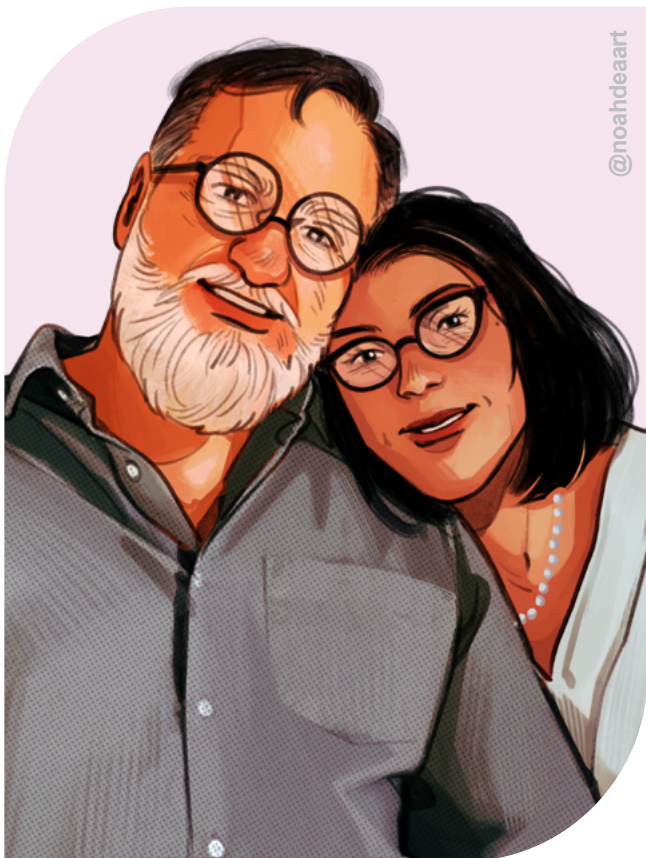
\* "Men" in this resource refers to cisgender men. "Trans women" refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who have a trans and gender diverse history or experience, but do not identify as transgender - and other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner.

# Respecting privacy

Trans women are all unique individuals. There is no one way they will look, sound, or act – and nor should there be. For trans women and their partners, dealing with how other people perceive them and the expectations they might hold can be complex.

For some trans women, other people may be able to tell they are transgender through the sound of their voice or various physical features. For others, people may only become aware they are a transgender woman when they choose to share that information.

Navigating the disclosure of their transgender identity, history or experience can be challenging for trans women and their partners. Some trans women and their partners may tell people upfront, while others may choose to disclose later, after they've gotten to know someone better. Sharing this information with others should only ever be done with her permission.



*“Like with any relationship, you want to be accepted within the family network, but it can be really hard to navigate. With anyone I’ve dated I’ve always said to them, ‘Let me meet your family first, so they can meet me as a human being, and then if you want, I’ll give you permission to share my gender identity with them.’ Then they don’t have the preconception of what I’m going to be, or who I’m going to be, based on what they have been exposed to in the media and through culture. Because for the majority of society I think their perception of trans people is often negative. I want them to experience who I am as a person first, rather than through my gender identity.” Hannah*

Trans women have the right to privacy and may have numerous reasons why they choose not to disclose their trans identity to others, including:

- They may not identify as transgender but as a woman who has a trans history or experience, where being trans is only one part of their identity
- They may be worried about negative responses from men’s family & friends and how that could impact their relationship
- For safety reasons – trans women experience high rates of verbal and physical abuse, and may have previous negative experiences around sharing this information
- To minimise risk of discrimination such as social exclusion or when accessing goods and services or in their workplaces
- Having to explain your trans experience to everyone can feel invasive, repetitive and exhausting.

Sometimes men may also choose to not disclose. This may be because they are being respectful of their partner's wish for privacy.

However, fear of a negative reaction can lead to some men hiding their relationships with trans women altogether. This can have a profound impact on the safety and well-being of trans women.

If someone has previously made statements in support of trans women, it may be easier for a man to introduce their trans partner to them. This is also true for trans women who wish to disclose that they are transgender.

*“My parents have always said that it doesn't matter who you are and what choices you make, we're always going to love you and support you. So growing up there was always this supportive inclusive environment... The first trans person I recall meeting was actually my brother's partner at the time and she was treated just like any other person coming into our family.” Michael*

Receiving a positive response while disclosing that their partner is transgender can be incredibly beneficial and affirming to both men and their partners.

*“He had to do the coming out of my gender identity with his friends, and they were really supportive. His mate told him, ‘If that's who you love, that's who you love.’ His friends helped him feel more secure. It relieves that pressure by having supportive people, having a supportive network of other men that have said, ‘You know what, that's okay. If that's who you love, then that's who you love.’” Hannah*

## Negative reactions to disclosure

A negative reaction from friends and families can be challenging to navigate and process. Transphobia can cause relationships to deteriorate, leading to feelings of loss, grief and disconnection. It can also negatively impact on mental health.

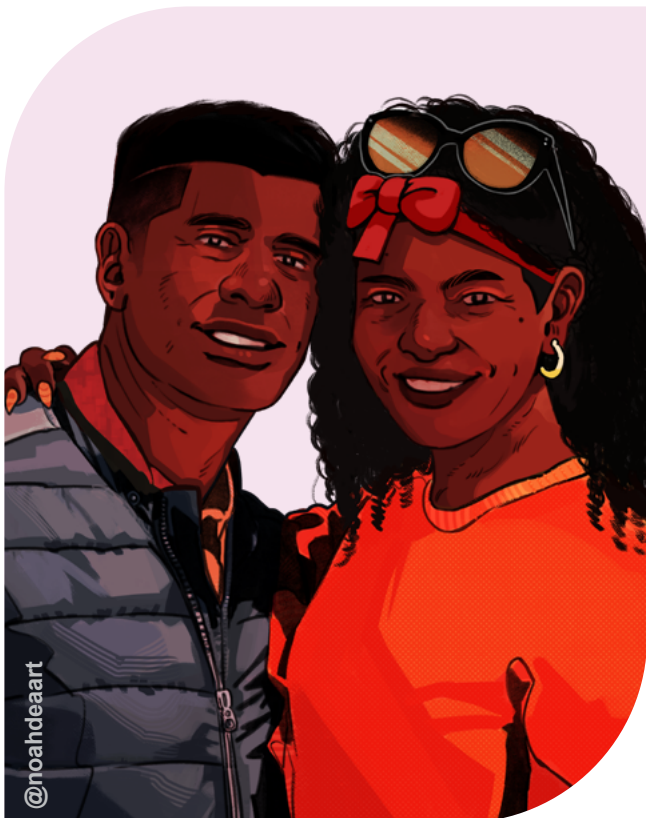
*“My partner's mother didn't respond well when he told her I was transgender. I just told him that ‘It's okay.’ I understood that his mum needed education and time. I said, ‘Maybe your mum will come around one day.’ He was a bit stressed and at the point where he didn't really talk to his mum much. He would always call his mum but he doesn't anymore, they stopped being so close. However his dad was supportive and at the time they were always having conversations, discussing why does mum behave this way. His dad talked to her, and I think that was why she changed her mind and her view towards me. At that time, I think we both supported each other because we were both going through the same thing together as a couple, and it was hard emotionally for both of us. It was very daunting.” Liz*

Families and friends may need some time to process. Encourage them to learn more about transgender people and their partner's experiences. It may be helpful for them to get support from an LGBTIQ+ affirming counselling service to help them work through their feelings and come to a place of acceptance and compassion. See the resources at the bottom of this tip sheet for more information.

If you witness other friends or family members behaving inappropriately or saying inappropriate things about trans women and their partners, it's important to challenge it, if it's safe to do so.

For more information on different ways to respond to inappropriate behaviour, check out our [Transfemme](#) resource *Talking respectfully with trans women & their partners?*

If you witness controlling, threatening or abusive behaviour from family, consider calling a family violence service that is LGBTIQ+ inclusive, or a family violence service delivered by an LGBTIQ+ organisation. They can provide advice and support on what to do.



## Learning more helps you be an informed ally.

Check out our other tip sheets for family and friends on the [Transfemme website](#).

If you need further advice on how to respond to transphobia or homophobia or need some emotional support and you're in Australia, you can contact:

### Qlife

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service

Website: [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

Phone: 1800 184 527

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day

Telephone and web chat support service

## Where to get more information and support

### Say It Out Loud

ACON's sexual, domestic and family violence website Say It Out Loud provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTQ+ community. For information on services in your area, click "Find Help Near You".

Website: [sayitoutloud.org.au](http://sayitoutloud.org.au)

### Transhub

TransHub is ACON's digital information and resource platform for all trans people, and their loved ones, allies and health providers.

Website: [transhub.org.au](http://transhub.org.au)

If you're outside Australia, you can try searching for "LGBTIQ+ help line in my area". Many LGBTIQ+ services provide support to friends and family members.