

## How do I get to know trans women better?



*This tip sheet is for men who date trans women or trans feminine people\* who want better sex or relationships, and who want to understand why some trans women might be hesitant to meet up.*

### Summary

- The best way to build a connection with a trans woman is to get to know her as a whole person with her own unique personality, history, ideas, feelings and desires.
- Many trans women want guys to like them as a whole person – not just because they're trans.
- Trans women want love and good relationships, but sometimes men only see them for sex.
- Some men treat trans women as sex objects, or only focus on one part of them, such as a body part or their race.
- Many men we have spoken to realise they have missed out on good romantic and sexual relationships because of doing this.
- Consider making friends with trans women, going on a date or even having a long term relationship.

\* "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.

*“I would say to my younger self to get to know and develop friendships with trans women outside of sexual or romantic relationships. I have meaningful friendships with trans women now and I’ve gotten to hear their stories. I think as men we need to learn from trans women’s experiences and address sexual objectification. It’s important that we speak to and educate other men.”*

*Mark*

Trans women want to be seen as whole people and are worthy of love and long-term relationships. However, some men may only see trans women as objects of sexual desire. This is sometimes due to stigma and discrimination in society.

Desiring trans women solely because of their trans identity, their race or particular aspects of their bodies can offend trans women – and they may choose to stop interacting with you. Even if you do this unintentionally, you need to understand that these are very common experiences for trans women. It’s important to empathise with how trans women may have been hurt by men.

*“I’ve slept with guys who fetishised me. It’s so boring, it’s just so unsatisfying. No one wants to be objectified for any part of their body, to experience having a part of your body kind of obsessed over by someone who’s ignoring that you’re a person.”* Stella

Many men we have spoken to have said they regret reducing trans women to being sexual objects, cutting themselves off from the romantic and sexual relationships they valued.

*“I once had an opportunity to go out on a date with a trans woman, but because I only saw her as a sexual thing it didn’t go well... She was amazing, a good salt of the earth woman, and I just had that one chance to see her. Yeah, she’s gone now. I feel bad for that to be honest, I actually regret that quite a bit.”*

*Tony*

Every trans woman is unique and has her own individual relationship to her identity. For some trans women their trans identity might be really important to them. For others it may not be the most important aspect of their lives. Gender is only one aspect of who we are.

*“I just want them to get to know me as me and take the trans-ness out of it. We’ll get to the trans-ness later, I just don’t want to be defined by it.”* Samantha

Many transgender women do not like men being attracted to them solely because they are transgender. They may feel men are treating them only as an object of desire, rather than seeing them as a whole person.

*“I want to be seen as a woman, but if you’re only attracted to trans people you’re not really seeing me for who I am. I’ve always wanted to be seen as a woman first who has a trans experience, as a part of my history, as a part of who I am.”* Hannah

Other trans women don’t mind if you are specifically attracted to trans women but want to know you respect them as a whole person.

*“I personally don’t care so much if men are specifically attracted to trans women. I’m more looking at their behaviours. Are they seeing me as an object and as a fetish, or are they actually wanting to get to know me? Because if you do want to get to know me and hang out with me for more than just sex, then I may be interested. But if you’re demanding me to act and dress in a particular way and you’re not treating me like a human being, then I’ll walk away.”*

*Electra*



## How do I know if I’m objectifying or fetishising trans women?

Trans women we spoke with gave the following examples:

- Viewing trans women as hypersexual
- Conversations solely centering on sex rather than any other aspect of trans women’s lives
- Being only interested in hooking up, rather than a date or a relationship
- Demanding trans women dress up for you or wear specific, sexualised clothing
- Fixation on body parts, particularly the genitals of trans women
- Using degrading or humiliating language or behaviours
- Leaving immediately after having sex.

Think about the way you have interacted with trans women and be honest with yourself. Realising you have treated trans women in a negative or derogatory way can be challenging and might bring up different emotions – like shame, guilt or anger. It can take time to move through these feelings. It’s also important to take time to reflect on the hurt this may have caused – and commit to doing better.

*“We all deserve to be loved and to be seen in our entirety. I’m looking for someone who can recognise that I have way more to offer than just my body. I’m incredible, it has taken so much strength and perseverance just to be myself. My life is rich and joyful and I’m open to sharing it with someone who can treat me with the respect I deserve.”*

*Electra*

## What are some of the ways I can treat trans women more respectfully?

- Get to know trans women in a variety of ways. Build friendships, not just romantic or sexual relationships.
- Take the time to get to know someone as a whole person, rather than solely focusing on someone's trans identity or on aspects of their body.
- Ask trans women if there's anything that makes them feel uncomfortable before engaging in sex. Be sure to check in during and after sex too.
- Ask trans women what they like during sex and how to best give them pleasure.
- Consider and prioritise their needs, desires, and enjoyment, beyond just the physical.
- Treat each trans woman you meet as a complex individual with her own unique personality, history, ideas, feelings and desires.
- Attend trans events, read about trans women's experiences and explore their art and literature.
- Go on a date or explore a long-term relationship.
- Introduce trans women to your friends or family or make an effort to meet hers.

*“You know just coming over and not having sex—that’s a win, that’s nice, hanging out and chatting, going to the beach, or having dinner. We’ve done heaps of different things together, even coming and meeting my family and friends.” Penelope*

## If you're looking for support in Australia:

### **Qlife**

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

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

### **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 LGBTIQ+ community.

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

### **Men's Referral Service**

A free, confidential telephone service for men

Phone: 1300 766 491

Open any time.

**For men outside Australia looking for counselling support, try searching online for “trans friendly counselling in my local area”.**