

## Disclosing trans experience to men & their families



Dating and hooking up with men can be fun, affirming and potentially romantic. Many trans women are in long-term fulfilling relationships with men. We all deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. However, in our society there can be many challenges for trans women who date men.

We know that sharing information based on real experiences is a great way of building empathy and understanding with our partners, our loved ones, and with ourselves. This resource was created by trans women at the Zoe Belle Gender Collective. It is part of a series based on [transfemme.com.au](https://transfemme.com.au), a website designed to promote healthier relationships between trans women and cisgender men that draws on interviews with a broad range of trans women and men about their sexual and romantic relationships.

We encourage you to print and share this resource with trans women who may not currently have access to the internet.

“Trans women” in this resource refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who may 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. Whilst “men” refers to cisgender men, men who exclusively identify with their gender assigned at birth.

The resource contains content that may be considered sensitive including sex, objectification and fetishisation and body dysphoria. Please access our referral section below if any of the content causes distress or if you would like further support.

## Disclosing to your partner

Whether we choose to disclose our trans experience to anyone else in our lives is our own personal decision. In terms of intimate relationships, some trans women will choose to share this information before meeting a guy. Others will wait until they feel safer to disclose to a partner. Some may choose to never disclose.

We all make our own decisions around disclosure based on a variety of reasons. There are no right or wrong answers. Some people may talk about disclosure in terms of “coming out” whilst others may think of it as “inviting people in”.

*“I’ve always disclosed very early on. Coming out is an easy way to gauge someone’s awareness and understanding. If that bridge burns, it’s not a relationship I would want to continue anyway.” Q*

Ultimately we deserve a world where sharing our trans experience with our partner(s) is met with openness, understanding and celebration. However, disclosing to our partner(s) can impact our safety and wellbeing if they react poorly.

If you are considering disclosing to a partner, talk to your friends or a service provider and make a plan to keep safe emotionally and physically, in the event of a negative response.

*“I’ll go on a couple dates and then usually on the second or third date, I’ll come out to them after gauging whether or not I think it’s safe.” Nicole*

There are common myths some trans women continue to experience in regards to disclosure, such as trans women are trying to trick, trap or deceive men for their own personal gain and desire.

*“Generally when dating I won’t tell the people I’m trans or gender diverse straight away. I do get very self-conscious. Dating platforms are very social places and I don’t want to out myself to thousands of people. That’s incredibly uncomfortable for me. A lot of men say that’s being deceptive or I’m trying to trick them in some way, but it’s about safety and privacy.” Nicole*

These myths stem from the historical and continued violence and persecution of the transgender community, where trans women have been forced to be discrete about their identities.

There are many different reasons why trans women may choose not to disclose their trans experience. They are all equally valid and should be respected.

*“I really wanted to establish a relationship and for him to get to know me, beyond my gender status. When I started to develop a deeper emotional connection with him, and I could see we were building towards a relationship, that was when I decided to share my transgender experience with him.” Hannah*

To ensure your safety when disclosing to a partner, consider writing a letter, letting them know over the phone or meeting in a public place.

Remember to give your partner time to process the disclosure. However he responds, know that you are worthy of love and respect.

It can be helpful to have resources or contact for services at hand where they can learn more about transgender women, discuss their feelings and work out a respectful response.

## Disclosing to your partner's family & friends

Trans women are an important part of our community. Your partner's social circle or family should be honored to have you as part of their world and should treat you with the same level of respect as anyone else.

*"I've lived through some hard times but it's good to see the world changing. I'm always heartened when I hear young people share their positive experiences in relationships. It's such a different experience from what I had – seeing young men interact with trans women with respect. Now, there's so much more positive visibility of our relationships. It gives me hope for the future." Petra*

Whether we choose to disclose is our own personal decision, but it's something that may need to be navigated with your partner. It's important that you feel safe and respected, whatever choices you make.

Navigating elements of disclosure to your partner's family and friends may be impacted by how we are read by others or whether we pass. Some trans women might prefer to have this information shared upfront. Some trans women may not pass. Others may negotiate the best time for disclosure with their partner(s).

Having a united front with your partner, in addressing inappropriate responses or invasive questions from their family and friends can be invaluable.

*"My partner and I had to prepare for meeting his family. I was pretty cis passing at the time, but there were things about my physical appearance where people might be able to tell I was trans. The only way I agreed to it was if he 100% backed me up if anyone made any comments or realised through the dinner that I might be trans. It was the women in the family who ended up making snide comments, but he defended me all the way. It made me feel proud and supported. He showed how much he actually cared for me." Candy*

Many trans women may have experiences where their partners are apprehensive, or refuse to introduce their trans partner to their family and friends.

It can be distressing feeling, like you're being hidden, or that you don't have the opportunity to integrate into your partner's whole life.

Many relationships between trans women and men break down around the question of disclosing to his family and friends. As trans women we all need to make our own decisions. There is no right or wrong answer.

*"It's very sad to say but I'm used to being hidden. It's not fair for me and I should put more value on myself, but I can't change everything. I can't reject everybody, and at some point I have to accept that it is what it is. I have left many of the men I've loved because I got offended when they wouldn't introduce me to the other people in their lives. I ask myself how many times I have to do that in my life, and I don't want to be miserable or lonely. I can't push that person or threaten to leave them. How many people have left me because of that?" Roxanne*

Trans women bear a disproportionate burden of these issues in our society. We deserve to be part of our partner's whole lives, including meeting his friends and family. However, respecting our partner's autonomy in regards to disclosure needs to be taken into account, especially in cultural and religious contexts, or family and community violence concerns.

Being upfront in your relationship about what you need and expect in a healthy relationship can help manage disagreements about disclosure and "coming out" to family and friends.

*"I am very open and upfront on my dating profiles that I am trans. It is not a part of my identity that I hide, nor do I want to be hidden or erased by my romantic partners. Before going on dates or starting a romantic relationship with a man, I ask him whether he would be willing to go on dates in public. Using this to filter men allows me to date men who wouldn't be ashamed to be seen with me and will invite me into all parts of his life, including meeting his friends and being welcomed into his family." Eva*

## Having children

Trans women have the right to have a family if they choose. Many couples may be considering having children as part of their relationship and this might be something you want to discuss with your partner. Whether or not to have children is a personal decision for anyone. There is no right or wrong answer.

There is also no right or wrong way to start a family. There are many options for trans women and men to have children, including surrogacy, IVF, fostering and adoption. It is equally valid to decide not to have children.

*“I do want to have kids. I would like to adopt in the future. I don’t mind not having genetically related children and that’s something my partner and I have talked about. It’s not a big barrier for us in our relationship, but it was an issue for his mum. She told him he needed to have a family, to have children, and that being with me, this wasn’t possible. But we can have a family if we want.” Liz*

As for any woman in a relationship, your worth should never be judged on whether you can bear children, or if you even want to be a parent.

Some trans women may already be in relationships where they have children, have had children in previous relationships or where their partner has children from previous marriages.

*“I was married for 25 years. My husband and I adopted two children because we wanted a family. We’re not together anymore but we still talk and he is still the father to my children. My children have grown up now and they accept me for who I am. I am proud of them. We have had some challenges along the way, but as they grew up we overcame them together. They are close to my heart. I love them.” Jessie*

Some men may feel or experience pressure from their family to leave a trans woman because she can’t give birth, but it is never appropriate to reduce any woman’s worth to their capacity to bear children.

If you or your partner are experiencing significant pressure or abuse from your extended families, consider accessing a family violence service or similar support service.

Whatever decisions people make around parenting in their lives, they should be respected.

## Further support

### Say it out loud

Provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTQ+ community.

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

### TransHub

A digital information and resource platform for trans and gender diverse people.

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

### Qlife

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service.

Telephone and web chat support service.

[qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au) | 1800 184 527

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day