

Stand WITH **Trans** | ADVOCATE
CELEBRATE
EDUCATE
A Decade of Trans Empowerment



**8 WAYS TO
SUPPORT TRANS YOUTH
ONE NAME AT A TIME**

NAMES & PRONOUNS MATTER

Names & pronouns are more than just **words!**
**They're a way of recognizing who
someone truly is.**

For **trans youth**, trying out different names or
pronouns can be an **important** part of
understanding and **expressing** their **identity**.

These **changes** don't mean confusion
or instability; they **reflect growth**,
self-knowledge, and the need
to feel **safe** and **seen**.



NAMES CHANGE. SUPPORT DOESN'T.



Research consistently shows...

That this support is linked to better mental health outcomes, including lower rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide risk.

However, being misnamed or misgendered can increase distress and make youth feel invisible or invalidated.

When we honor name & pronoun changes

— even when they change more than once —

we send a powerful message that trans youth are believed, respected, and belong.



This type of support can make a life-changing difference





Supporting trans youth in the foster care system who change names/pronouns often can feel confusing

but it's usually a sign of exploration, not instability

Here's how to be solid support without burning out

TREAT CHANGES AS PART OF DISCOVERY, NOT “FLIP- FLOPPING”

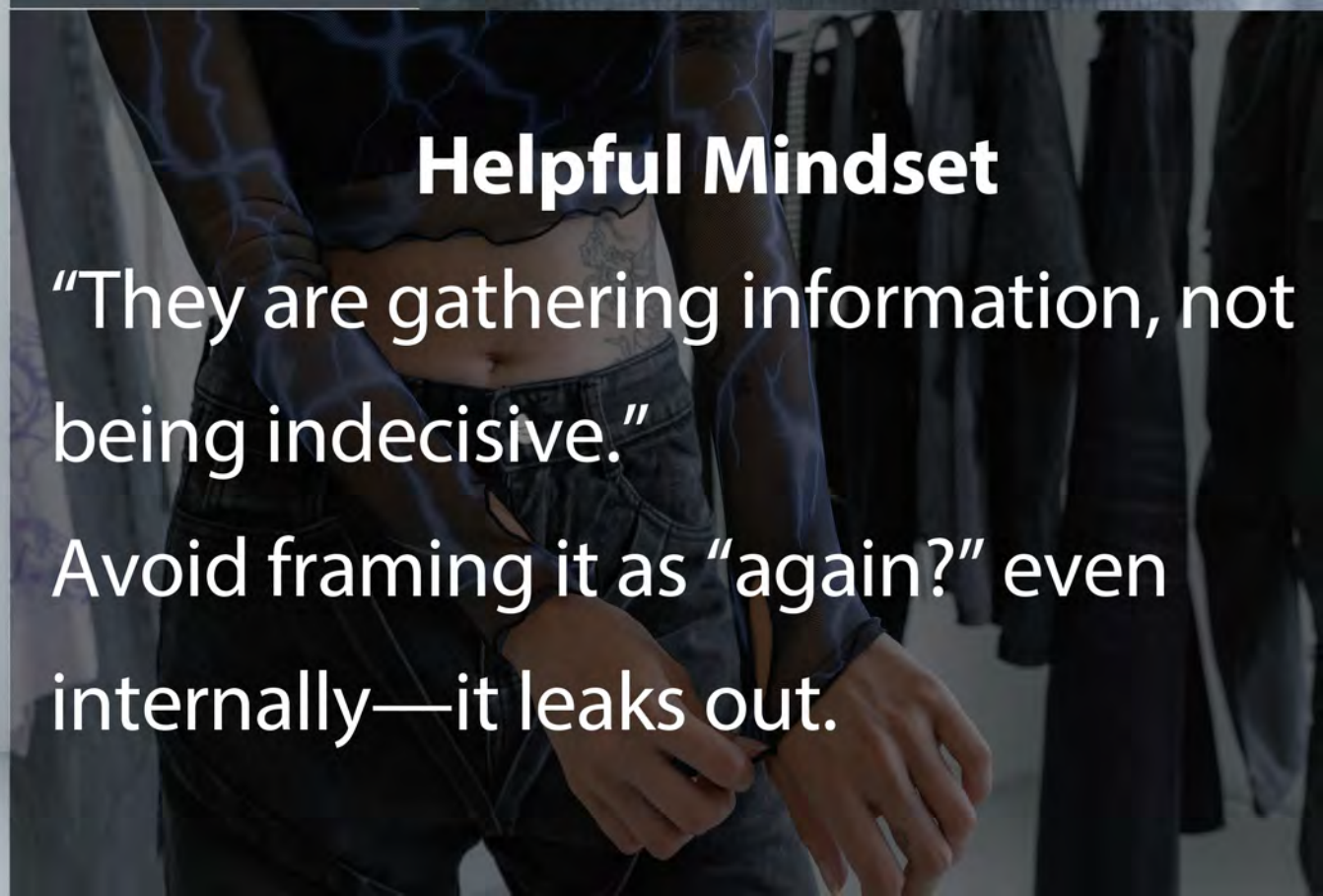
For many trans youth, testing different names & pronouns is like trying on clothes. Sometimes, it takes a few different tries to find what might fit.



Helpful Mindset

“They are gathering information, not being indecisive.”

Avoid framing it as “again?” even internally—it leaks out.



USE WHAT THEY ASK FOR NOW (NOT WHAT FEELS MOST LIKELY TO STICK)

You don't need certainty to show respect.

**Think of it as a
nickname and use it
for now.**



- Use the most current name & pronouns that were requested
- If it changes again, update and keep going
- You're giving them dignity in the moment

02



NORMALIZE MISTAKES—BUT DON'T MAKE IT THEIR JOB

You
WILL
mess up

What matters
is how you
recover

Correct quickly: “Sorry—they said...”
Don't over-apologize, just move on
Don't ask them to reassure you

I ♥ mistakes

Best Practice

Over-apologizing can turn your feelings
03 into their emotional labor.

ASK HOW THEY WANT CHANGES HANDLED

**This gives
them agency
and saves
everyone
stress**



**“Is this name/pronoun for
everywhere, or just certain
spaces?”**

**“Do you want me to correct
others, or would you rather do
that?”**

**If I mess up, how would you like me
to handle it?”**

04

SEPARATE SUPPORT FROM CONFUSION



It's okay to feel
confused. It's not
okay to make
confusion their
burden.

If you need to process:

- Talk to other adults, support groups, or counselors
- Journal or keep private notes to track changes
- Practice names/pronouns in your head before seeing them



05

**They shouldn't have to justify their
identity because it's inconvenient.**

WATCH FOR EXTERNAL PRESSURE—NOT JUST INTERNAL CHANGE

**Frequent changes can
sometimes reflect:**

Unsafe environments

**Positive or negative peer
influence**

**Fear of being “wrong” or “not
trans enough”**



**Gently check in without
questioning their identity by
asking:**

**“How are you feeling about this
change—excited, unsure,
something else?”**



Let them take the lead.



SIGNAL UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT

(EVEN IF THINGS CHANGE AGAIN)

Help them feel they
deserve to explore their
identity, by affirming...

**It's okay to not know your
identity**

**It's okay to explore
who you are and try
on different
identities**

**They still deserve
to feel respected**

07

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



It's okay to

- Set reminders
- Ask for patience without withdrawing support
- Admit, privately, that you're still learning
- Allow yourself to feel whatever feelings you have
- Celebrate when you get it right

Supporting trans youth in the foster care system can be emotional work



SUMMARY

01 TREAT CHANGES AS PART OF DISCOVERY, NOT “FLIP-FLOPPING”

02 USE WHAT THEY ASK FOR NOW (NOT WHAT FEELS MOST LIKELY TO STICK)

03 NORMALIZE MISTAKES—BUT DON’T MAKE IT THEIR JOB

04 SEPARATE SUPPORT FROM CONFUSION

05 WATCH FOR EXTERNAL PRESSURE—NOT JUST INTERNAL CHANGE

06 SIGNAL UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT

07 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

lead with respect,
flexibility, and
curiosity—not
frustration



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