

# Boys or girls?

Category: Diversity

written by Pam Adelstein | April 15, 2025

Like many parents, I love to talk about my children. A conversation with someone to whom I'm newly introduced often begins with "Do you have children?" (Yes.) "How many?" (Two.) Then the natural and understandable follow-up question is usually "Boys or girls?"

Usually, I revel in the possibilities inherent in meeting someone new. However, at such moments, I pause and protest silently. *Ugh!* This is a question one should never ask someone you're just meeting.

I understand that the folks who ask it are well-intentioned and are just trying to make conversation. But for parents of gender diverse children, the question opens a minefield:

Do you disclose—and then wait for the barrage of questions? They're predictable: When did they come out? Do they take hormones? Do you think it's a phase? Are you worried about them in this political climate? I can never get the pronouns right, and it feels unnatural to use the singular "they." (*And why is this now my problem?*) And on and on . . .

Or do you not share—and then feel like you're being untruthful? In a matter of seconds, you must resolve whether you feel it's safe to share personal information with this person you just met. The child's needs always come first. Is the child living as an out gender-diverse person, or are they stealth—with no one knowing their sex assigned at birth? During instances of non-disclosure, misgendering one's child—even out of necessity, even if they're properly gendered at home—feels just awful and serves as a tragic reminder of the horrific rhetoric used to target trans people.

The truth is that gender-diverse children are so much more than their gender. Just like cis children are. Gender-diverse children have creative thoughts and varied interests. They express their individuality in fabulous ways with their dress, hair, and clothes. They are brave and understand themselves after introspection that many of their cis counterparts have not undertaken. They do regular kid things and get in trouble or mess up the way kids are supposed to, so they can learn to do better next time. They want to be loved by those who are supposed to support and love them. They want to have friends who can be relied on when they have a difficult day. They want to converse about topics other than their gender journey. They are people. Diverse people.

"Tell me about your children—where they live, what they enjoy." *That* is my favorite follow-up question.

*Pam Adelstein*

*Newton, Massachusetts*