



Keeping the perspectives alive

The most important thing you can do to support your child, is simply to be present...present with yourself, with the moment (whatever it may hold) and with them. This **above all else** will guide you, develop your confidence and strengthen your connection with your child. You don't have to know all the answers. You don't have to be spot on. You just have to be. This is the best way to begin!

With that said, here are some possible ways to hold the truth of multiple genders in your daily life with your child. Play with these ideas. Feel free. Be creative! This play is less about being "right" when it comes to terms and pronouns but more about keeping possibilities open. Opening our minds to know more about ourselves and our world is a wonderful game. This can be adjusted to any age. You can even say that you're learning too! With older kids you can also use these ideas to reflect back and reframe books and movies from early childhood as a place to start.

The sooner you start doing this with your kids, the easier it will be. But it's never too late.

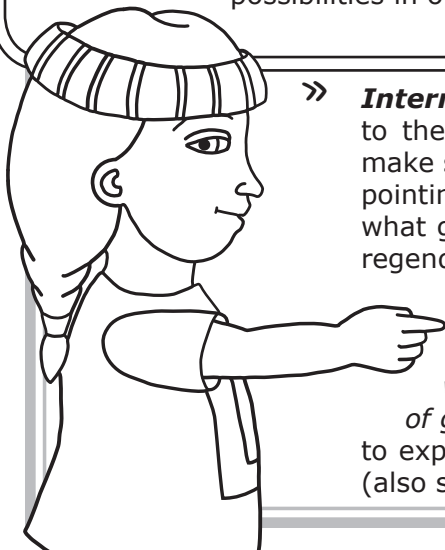
Begin where you are. **Begin now.**

BOOKS

CHANGING PRONOUNS & USING 'THEY'

What this might look like:

- » **Expanding Gender Expression:** Switch out pronouns of the characters in books. For example, if a character is written as 'he' change it to 'she' or vice versa. How does this expand perceptions of the character for you and your child?
- » **Keeping Expression Open:** Change pronouns to 'they' when reading books. It not only provides freedom, it also sets precedence for ways of thinking and using language that are inclusive. This is less about changing all the names of everything and more about modeling the existence of all gender possibilities equally.
- » **Freeing Pronouns & Assumptions:** My partner and I created the book, *They She He Me: Free to Be!* to expand ideas of 'he' and 'she' and more. This can be a great companion to open up gender possibilities in other books.



- » **Interrupting Assumptions:** As a growing child is exposed more and more to the dominance of the boy/girl binary, the more it may be necessary to make sure visual assumptions are not going unexamined. This means actually pointing at characters in books and modeling being curious and open to what gender people and even animals could be. You may want to specifically regender someone in a book that could be assumed to be a boy and calling them a girl or including that some may not identify as boy or a girl or may feel like both. You may find that a child may proclaim *no that's a boy*. Stay very simple in your response: *"That may be true, but we'd never know unless we could ask them ourselves and I know lots of girls who look like this."* Bringing in the pronoun book mentioned above to expand gender expression may also be helpful while reading other books. (also see *Child Response* on the back)

BOOKS

USE BOOKS WITH ANIMALS



What this might look like:

- » Choosing books with animal characters is a great way to maintain multiple gender perspective. Naturally many animals are queer/trans/intersex, like bears, deer, lizards, snakes, butterflies, kangaroos-- like Kanga in Winnie the Pooh! This is a great opportunity to casually include: *I wonder if Kanga is he or she or they? I know kangaroos have many ways of being, just like people! What do you imagine Kanga would say if we asked?*
- » It doesn't matter what your child's response is. What matters is to keep the door open to awareness of multiple genders.



BODY AND SEXUALITY BOOKS

What this might look like:

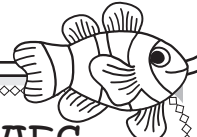
- » Cory Silverberg's books, *What Makes a Baby* and *Sex is a Funny Word* are fabulous inclusive books and must-haves.
- » For less inclusive books, as you read the book and look at the illustrations also include multiple gender expressions. When you look at a child with a penis, include that this person may be 'she' or 'they.' Also include that a pregnant person may be 'he' and that many people who know they are a boy may also have a uterus and decide to have babies if they want to.

CHILD RESPONSE

- » If we are consistent, we may find our child saying these things before we do. And possibly even sharing it with their close friends.
- » But even if we are consistent, we may find our child (or our child's friends) may challenge us and try to tell us that there are only boys and girls and we are being ridiculous.
- » This makes perfect sense. The binary gender perspective is at times staunchly dominant in our current culture. Stay very simple in your response. State something like: *It's true that a lot of people don't understand that there are many different ways to be. But I know what I know and I imagine one day everyone will know it too. You and I already know that there are many different ways for people to be, even if other people don't know yet.*
- » If you stay simple and confident, you are giving your child the most powerful message possible through modeling. This matters immensely.



MOVIES



- » The movie *Finding Nemo* has Clown Fish as main characters. Clown Fish actually change their bodies to accommodate the circumstances of their lives. If the movie was true to life, Nemo's father would have transitioned to a female fish to act as Nemo's parent.
- » The movie *Turbo* is about a racing snail in which all the snails are gendered as boys or girls. All snails are actually intersex so it's a perfect opportunity to point out this fact to kids. For example, *"Did you know snails aren't boys or girls they're actually boy and girl at the same time"*



CONSISTENCY

- » Having one book, one lesson, one moment can make a difference, but the binary of he/she is very dominant right now and can easily eclipse any alternative. If you want to have a significant impact you must maintain a consistent and persistent perspective that a kid can easily adopt and use because it makes sense to them. To do this a kid literally must hear you provide pronoun and gender alternatives everyday in as many ways as possible. This means constancy and creativity. What can you realistically maintain? Perhaps you convert to using they for most pronouns. Or have a set of books that you always read with different pronouns or particular movies that you always look at in gender expansive ways.