

What we WISH our friends KNEW



Inter/Act is a national project led by young people with DSD/intersex traits, ages 14-25.

Inter/Act is a group of intersex youth advocates that work together to raise awareness. We created this brochure to give our peers some insight into how best to support us along our journey of growing up intersex or with a Difference of Sex Development (DSD). Thank you for reading and please *pass it on!*

What :: is :: INTERSEX?

People with intersex conditions, sometimes referred to by physicians as “DSD” or Differences of Sex Development, are born with physical differences inside and/or outside their body, this happens when our body’s genetic sex chromosomes, organs, and/or hormones don’t line up in a way that is typical for a “male” or “female”. People find out they’re intersex during all stages of life, and some people never find out. There is no ONE experience that can categorize us all.

There are many intersex variations, and roughly 1 in every 2,000 people are born with intersex traits. In a school of 2,000, there’s a good chance that at least one student is intersex.

Shame is a very common feeling for intersex people due to secrecy, possible surgeries, negative experiences at doctors’ offices or even reactions from friends and family. This has often made it difficult for us to be “out,” but we’re working to change that! Educating our peers is critical to building a future where intersex kids are free to be their true authentic selves. The following is some of our thoughts on how you can better understand and support us.

How to act

- * I’m scared people will think I’m different or abnormal. Please treat me with dignity and respect.
- * Some of us get our periods and others don’t. If you know I don’t get my period, ask me if I’m comfortable hearing you talk about yours. Sometimes hearing about how much they can suck feels nice but sometimes I can feel really left out.
- * If parts of what I disclose to you don’t make sense, say something like “I don’t understand everything yet, but I want to keep learning so I can support you.” That would mean the world to me.
- * Be aware that people born intersex are often prescribed hormone replacement therapy (HRT). These medications may affect my emotions, mood, or behavior and in some cases spur bodily changes that may be new to me.

“ Understand that *I am on a journey* and may still have a long way LONG WAY TO GO. ”



Resist assumptions

- * If you've heard about intersex before, please don't assume things about me. Instead, ask me questions to better understand what makes me unique and how I feel about it.
- * If I ever seem tired of talking, feel free to do some research on your own time.
- * Ask me how I identify because my gender identity may be simple and stable or it could be complicated and fluid.
- * Don't presume or ask me anything about my genitalia unless I bring it up. False assumptions have the power to keep me from feeling like I can be open about my experience.

Create intentional space

- * Talking about being intersex can be really difficult. I might need time to process what it means before I find the right moment to share with it you.
- * Check in with me to see how I am doing and let me know you care. Remind me often that I can always come to you for support.
- * My feelings may change as I grow. Please don't assume that because I'm okay today that I will be tomorrow. Appreciating this helps me navigate my complex healing process.
- * Understand that I'm on a journey and may still have a long way to go.

Validate my emotions

- * Being intersex can have a huge effect on my life or it might not be a big deal at all. Each intersex person is different, please don't expect me to feel the same as someone else.
- * Respect that sometimes you just won't be able to understand my emotions.
- * Please don't say things like "You're so lucky you don't get a period", "I wish I had that because I don't ever want kids" or "Don't worry about it because you're so attractive."
- * Please don't tell me that I can 'just adopt.' My inability to conceive children naturally may require a grieving process and that should be respected.
- * Instead, check in with me and ask me how I'm doing. Supportive questions like "How do you feel about it?" and "What's your favorite and least favorite part" are great places to start.
- * Know that I might not always want to talk about it.
- * Let me know you appreciate how hard it might have been to disclose these personal details and that you're thankful I shared them with you.



“It’s my right to decide what I share with others.”

Respect my privacy

- * It's my right to decide what to share with others.
- * Please don't share what I told you with anyone else unless you have my consent. This includes your family, people you're dating, and your teachers.
- * Don't put me on the spot. I need time to process and decide when's best for me to tell other people.
- * I have a right to know if you did tell others. Remember it's my experience, not yours.

Accept my identity

- * I may have had surgery with or without my permission, and it may be hard for me to accept myself when others failed to do so in past.
- * The proper terms to use are intersex or differences of sex development (DSD). Please ask me what I prefer.
- * I may identify anywhere on the gender spectrum from woman to man and everything outside and in-between those two categories.
- * Allow me to decide who and what I am. Like anyone else, my gender expression and sexual identity may change throughout my life.
- * Please embrace my growth, let me know that being born intersex is not shameful and that you love and care about me.

Inter/Act is a place for young people born with intersex traits to come together, express themselves, and unite their individual stories to develop a voice for a new generation. We don't always agree with each other, and we don't expect you will either.

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