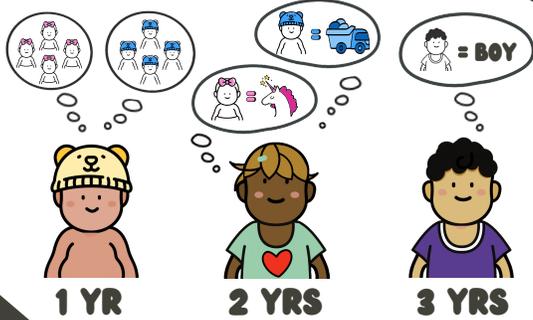


GENDER & DIVERSE FAMILIES: WHY TALK ABOUT THESE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN?

When we engage in **age-appropriate conversations** with young children about the diversity of families and gender, we give them the language and freedom to explore their identities while creating a more **expansive and inclusive world for everyone**.

THEIR BRAINS ARE PRIMED

From an early age, children think about and **categorize by gender**. At 12 months, they might call everyone they think of as a man, "Daddy." By age 2, children start to **reflect ideas about gender through play** ("Girls play with dolls"), and around 2 ½ years, young children talk about their own gender ("I'm a big boy!").



WE MUST INTERRUPT BIASES

Children understand stereotypes about gender based on what they hear and see in books, on TV, at the store, and from those around them. They absorb these biases unless we help them **notice, reflect, and act differently**. By opening society's "gender boxes," we create a more expansive world for everyone.



ACCEPTANCE PROMOTES WELL BEING

What we say about gender and love has a **profound impact on children**, especially those who do not fit society's narrative. LGBTQ+ youth are far more likely to consider suicide, abuse substances and suffer depression than their peers. But there is good news: **family acceptance protects youth** against these negative outcomes. It is never too early to support young children in feeling confident in their own bodies, families, classroom, and world.





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