

## How do I overcome being worried about dating trans women in public?



*This tip sheet is for men who date trans women or trans feminine people\* who want to be more confident about their relationships and dating experiences.*

### Summary

- Trans women who date men should be shown the same respect around having public relationships as any other woman.
- Some men worry about what other people will think if they notice their partner or date is transgender. They may even want the relationship to be kept secret.
- This can be painful for trans women and can affect their mental health.
- It's important to be aware of your fears or insecurities – and not let them hurt trans women.
- Finding self-acceptance can lead to healthier relationships, for both of you.

\* "Men" in this resource refers to cisgender men. "Trans women" refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who have a trans and gender diverse history or experience, but do not identify as transgender - and other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner.

*Trans women who are interested in dating men should be shown the same respect around having public relationships as any other woman. Healthy relationships flourish when there is openness, pride and transparency.*

*“The very first time I met him was at a restaurant. It was one of my first dates since coming out and transitioning so I kept checking with him... He was totally relaxed and said straight up, ‘I’m not going to let anyone tell me who I can and can’t be with.’ For me it kind of struck a chord and ever since then it hasn’t even been an issue.” Olivia*

However, some men worry about what other people will think or whether they will be able to tell if their partner or date is transgender, particularly in public.

*“On our very first (public) date I was thinking about whether people know if she’s trans or not, but over time I became more comfortable. I just don’t care anymore about what other people are thinking. We put too much emphasis on what other people are thinking rather than just living our lives.” Rob*

Some men even attempt to keep these relationships secret, which can be very painful for their partners. This may make them feel uncomfortable and can negatively impact their mental health and self-confidence.



*“I wanted some affection and intimacy, so I ended up staying the night with him. In the morning he said he needed to get ready for work. I suggested we catch the train together, but he replied, ‘No, I don’t want people to see me leaving the house with you.’ So, he wanted me to come around in the middle of the night and leave in the middle of the night. It was like the fact he’d explored any intimacy with me was so deeply shameful to him. I was made to feel worthless—and my desire wasn’t seen as equal or valid.” Crystal*

**Tip:** Be aware of your own fears and insecurities and be careful not to project them onto trans women. This can look like getting angry and blaming trans women for your feelings, making negative comments about how trans women look, demanding trans women be hyper feminine, or making unreasonable demands around secrecy.

*“Being hidden from everybody, that’s one of the big ways trans women get disrespected and hurt. She may accept that because she loves you, but it still hurts. Just be proud of that person you’re walking outside with, because you love her, she loves you, and that’s enough I think.” Roxanne*

**Tip:** If you’re worried about what other people think, be honest. Trans women can usually tell anyway. Firstly, apologise – it’s a horrible feeling to know that someone is ashamed to be seen with you in public. Then admit your concerns and take responsibility by seeking support from friends, a professional or further resources, to help you be more comfortable with yourself.

*“Do some internal reflection and consider what it is you want and why you want to hook up with a trans woman. If you do generally find trans women attractive, it’s okay, you can take a trans woman on a date.” Eva*

**Tip:** Finding ways to relax and feel comfortable together is a great way to manage and work through any insecurities. For example, spending time together as friends getting to know each other, cooking a meal or watching a movie together, or planning a romantic weekend away. Showing her care and respect while managing your feelings means everyone feels more comfortable.

*“I’ve had experiences with men where it’s a hidden and private thing—but they’re still romantic. We’ll cook dinner together or he’ll bring me flowers and I know he’s seeing me as someone that’s deserving of romantic experiences that are so normal for other people to have—and that many trans women just don’t get.” Crystal*

Ultimately, finding acceptance in yourself can lead to healthier relationships for both you and her.

*“What other people think of you isn’t important. What matters is that you are confident in who you are and that you’re not ashamed of who you are.” Rob*

*“I was seeing this guy and he was so chill and casual. I could tell he was really proud to be out with me. We went to the beach for a romantic weekend away and stayed in a cute bed and breakfast. We ate in restaurants and walked along the beach. He made me feel great.” Crystal*

## If you’re looking for support in Australia:

### **Qlife**

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

Website: [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

Phone: **1800 184 527**

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day

Telephone and web chat support service

### **Say It Out Loud**

ACON’s sexual, domestic and family violence website *Say It Out Loud* provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTIQ+ community.

Website: [sayitoutloud.org.au](http://sayitoutloud.org.au)

### **Men’s Referral Service**

A free, confidential telephone service for men

Phone: **1300 766 491**

Open any time.

**For men outside Australia looking for counselling support, try searching online for “trans friendly counselling in my local area”.**