

One of a Kind Like Me/Único como yo

Guide for Families



Thanks so much for checking out this guide! You can use it to find ideas for starting conversations with your child(ren) about the topics that are touched on in *One of a Kind, Like Me/Único como yo*. The guide also addresses some of the questions you or other family members might have. Selected resources are listed at the end that can help you answer questions that might come up, increase your knowledge about gender diversity, or get support.

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About the Book

One of a Kind Like Me/Único como yo is a bilingual story (Spanish/English) about a child named Danny who wants to be a princess in the school parade. Danny and his mom go searching for the perfect dress. Will they find it in time?

The story is based on a multiracial, multigenerational, bilingual family with a single mom.

Ages 4-8. Written by Laurin Mayeno. Illustrated by Robert Liu-Trujillo. Translation by Teresa Mlawer. Published by Blood Orange Press, 2016.

Talking with Children About the Book

Your child is learning about gender from what they see and hear around them all the time. *One of a Kind, Like Me/Único como yo* can help them explore things they are already thinking about. Children are heavily influenced by expectations related to gender, and may be absorbing ideas that are harmful. *One of a Kind, Like Me/Único como yo* can help you start conversations and explore ideas together. If your child has had difficult experiences related to gender at home or at school, reading the book may help them talk about their experiences and feelings.

Starting Conversations: Topics and Prompts

One way to start a conversation is by following your child's lead and talking about whatever they bring up. If there's a topic you want to talk about with your child, the prompts and follow-up questions below can give you ideas to get conversations started.

Gender and Self-expression – Gender doesn't have to limit what you like, what you wear, or what you do. Be yourself and let your friends be who they are too.

- Are there any toys that only girls or only boys can play with? Follow up: What if a girl likes trucks or a boy likes dolls?
- Do you think there are any clothes or colors that only girls can wear or only boys can wear? Follow up: What if a boy likes to wear skirts or dresses? Do all girls like pink?
- Has anyone ever told you not to do something because of your gender? How did you feel?

Gender Diversity - There are many different genders and no one gender is better than another. It's not better to be a boy, a girl, or any other gender.

- What is gender? What makes someone a boy, a girl, or another gender? Encourage exploration without having to have a definitive "answer".

Valuing Diversity – No two people are exactly the same. We are all "one of a kind" and we all belong.

- How are you one-of a-kind? What do you like about yourself?

Being a Friend - Sometimes people get teased and bullied. Having a friend can make a big difference.

- What can you do so that nobody at our school feels left out?
- What can you do if someone is being teased? If you were teased, what would you want your friends to do?
- What makes someone a good friend? (Focus on character traits, highlighting that these traits are what matter, not someone’s gender or what they wear.)

Other Topics: Family Diversity, Language Diversity, Determination, Creativity

- What is unique or different about our family?
- What language(s) do you and your family speak? What do you like about speaking more than one language?
- Is there a language that you want to learn to speak? What is it and why?
- Have you ever had to try more than once to do something you wanted to do? What was it?
- What are creative things you like to do?

Responding to Children’s Questions

Some of the best conversations happen in response to questions children bring up. Below are some questions your child may have. Try responding with questions that encourage your child to explore their own thoughts, rather than giving answers.

You might ask: “What do you think?” or “Do you know anyone who thinks differently about that?” Or, check out the examples below for possible follow-up questions.

Questions Your Child May Have	Suggested Follow-up Questions
Why does Danny want to be a princess? I thought only girls could be princesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do you think Danny wants to be a princess? ● Has anyone here ever dressed up as a princess? What did you like about it? ● If a girl wanted to dress up as Darth Vader what would you say?
Aren’t dresses for girls?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why should only girls wear dresses? ● Who likes to wear dresses? Why do you like to wear them?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If someone said pants were only for girls, what would you say? Do you think that would be fair?
Why does Danny act like a girl?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is a girl? Who can be one? ● What is acting like a girl? Do all girls act that way?
Is Danny gay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does the word gay mean to you? ● Can you know if someone is gay if they don't tell you?
Is Danny really a girl?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you think Danny is a girl? What makes you think that? ● Can you know what someone's gender is if they don't tell you? ● What are some different genders that people can be?
Is Danny transgender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does the word transgender mean to you? ● Do you think Danny could be transgender? Why do you think that? ● Can you know someone's gender if they don't tell you?
Where is Danny's dad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where do you think Danny's dad is? Why do you think there's no dad in the story? ● Who do you think takes care of Danny? Who takes care of you?

Phrases to Avoid - When responding to questions about transgender people, avoid phrases like “born in the wrong body”, “born a boy (or girl) and became a girl (or boy)”, “brain and body don't match”, “a boy (or girl) in a girl's (or boy's) body”. These explanations may be hurtful and don't reflect many transgender people's experience.

Questions You or Your Family May Have

Below are some questions that may come up with sample responses.

<p>Why are you introducing this topic to children at such a young age? They are too young to understand these things.</p> <p>Children pick up a lot of information about gender from the world around them starting at a very young age – from their peers, teachers, media, and families. Some of these messages are affirming and others may be limiting and even harmful. It's important that adults talk with them about gender in a way that is positive and affirming.</p>

It's also important to send a message that all children belong and are worthy of love and respect. Children who stretch beyond social expectations related to gender may feel alone because they are different than other children. Seeing themselves in books can help them feel less isolated and build positive self-esteem.

Building awareness and understanding from an early age can reduce teasing and bullying and make it safer for all children to be who they are.

If you encourage a boys to wear dresses are you setting them up to be bullied?

It's important to be concerned with a child's safety. If you have a boy in your family who wants to wear a dress, or any child who isn't limited by gender stereotypes, it's important to make sure that the environment is as safe as possible and there are people there to support them.

If you restrict what a child wears so that they are safer, it's important to help them understand that there is nothing wrong with them or the clothes they like – you just want them to be safe because there are people who don't understand.

Why doesn't the book touch on bullying?

Children are often bullied because they don't act the way others expect them to based on gender. There are already books that deal with this important topic. This book is about a child who is affirmed by parents, teachers, and friends. It allows children to learn about gender diversity in an affirming way, not just in relationship to bad things that might happen. Encouraging children to see people who are different in a positive light is one way to prevent bullying. Bullying and being an ally can be part of conversations about the book.

I think my child might be transgender. What should I do?

If you think your child might be transgender, especially if they are insistent about their gender over time, it is important listen and make sure they get the support they need. Affirming a child's gender lowers the risk of depression and anxiety and supports their mental health. If you need support to deal with your own feelings and reactions, or information on how to support your child, there are resources available for families of transgender children.

How can I support my child to be an ally?

Children learn a lot by the behavior they see from people around them. When children bully, it's often because they feel powerless in some area of their lives and want to feel more powerful. Appreciate your child and help them value the things about themselves that are unique or "different". Help them build positive connections to others, a sense of belonging, and compassion.

You can also teach your child not to be a passive bystander. Show your child the importance of speaking up if they see someone being teased or bullied. Encourage them to talk to a teacher or other adult if another child is being mistreated.

Selected Resources

[Gender Spectrum: Understanding Gender and Gender Terminology](https://bit.ly/11x31gl) <https://bit.ly/11x31gl>

[Using Gender Inclusive Language with Children and Families](https://bit.ly/2kwYbz3) <https://bit.ly/2kwYbz3>

[Book Lists from Welcoming Schools](https://bit.ly/2m7YG2F) <https://bit.ly/2m7YG2F>

More resources are available at oneofakindlikeme.com and mayenoconsulting.com.

Support for Families:

[Gender Diversity](http://genderdiversity.org) - genderdiversity.org

[Gender Spectrum](http://genderspectrum.org) - genderspectrum.org

[PFLAG](http://pflag.org) - pflag.org

[Somos Familia](http://somosfamilia.org) (bilingual resources and support) - somosfamilia.org

A Final Note and Thanks

I hope you have found this guide useful and wish you great success in your conversations with children. I would love it if you'd drop me a note to let me know how your conversations go and what questions come up.

This new version of the guide was made possible thanks to the wisdom of Mauro Sifuentes and Ellen Tuzzolo whose recommendations resulted in huge improvements. I'm also immensely grateful to the many children, families, and educators I've talked with since the book was published.

I've done my best to use language that is accurate, respectful, and accessible in this guide. Language is constantly changing as are ways of understanding and talking about gender. This guide will be updated periodically to reflect those changes. Please check for the latest revisions at oneofakindlikeme.com. I welcome your feedback at Laurin@mayenoconsulting.com.

All my best,

Laurin Mayeno,
Author & Consultant

P.S. I will be working on a Spanish version of this guide as soon as possible!