

December 26, 2014

Dear ASC Community,

Happy Holidays! Can you believe another year has passed? My beautiful Noam Sseki turned two this week. We have felt so loved and nurtured from ASC. Noam Sseki is growing up in such a warm and loving community. He and I feel that ASC, as one of our spiritual homes, is so special to us. Thank you!

I have had the honor of speaking from the pulpit and on a panel during OWL about my identity as a transgender person. I am here to speak again in a different way, in writing. As Noam Sseki is growing and talking ever so much, he also understands more than ever before. I am asking as a community to please call me by my chosen parent name, Maataa, and my pronouns, (my name) Taan (or) they and them.

I will offer a couple examples:

Noam Sseki, your Maataa went to get you a napkin, they will be right back.

Noam Sseki, your Maataa went to get you a napkin, your Maataa will be right back.

-or-

I think Taan wrote a book and I'd love for you to check it out.

I think they wrote a book and I'd love for you to check it out.

Beyond language, as Noam Sseki's Maataa, I am here to teach not only him, but others around us who we are and about our family. I am happy to answer any questions and engage in conversations too.

Warmth and Light,

Taan Shapiro

## How Do I Talk with My Child About Gender Identity?

So many of us have all kinds of questions. It makes sense because difference yields intrigue. This question and answer sheet is meant to offer talking points and ideas for the harder to answer questions, particularly to our children.

Q: If Noam Sseki has a Maataa, does that mean he has a mom or a dad?

A: Noam Sseki has a parent who likes to be called Maataa. Maybe your parent likes to be called mom or dad, ima or abba, amma or papa. Everyone has different special adults. Some children even have a grandma or grandpa that is like a parent.

Q: Why do you keep saying parent instead of mom or dad?

A: The word parent sounds formal doesn't it? Sometimes the English language is hard for people who are transgender. That's why Noam Sseki's Maataa made this word up. They love to make up words for themselves because there aren't always English words to describe everything. What about Dr. Seus books? Think of all the words made up to describe characters and places.

Q: Why use the pronouns they and them? Isn't that plural and not proper English?

A: There we are again; English words can be hard. They and them is the best solution for Noam Sseki's Maataa. It can be hard for some people to think of one person as they. It takes practice.

Q: Why do I even need to say Maataa or they and them to begin with? It's easier for me to say mom and she.

A: It is true that it may be easier for you. But for Noam Sseki's Maataa, it is who they are as a person. Noam Sseki is talking so much and he models what he hears. He is able to say Maataa. He isn't using sentences with pronouns yet, but he will.

Q: How do you know Noam Sseki wants to be called he?

A: I don't know. Parents chose names for their children and use pronouns. But when Noam Sseki gets older, if he chooses to change how he wants to be called or if he wants to use different pronouns, then we will all change right along with him. For now, Noam Sseki is who he is as we all are who we are.