

Parent/Carer Toolkit

Gender identity and dysphoria in young people

A resource for parents & carers to help support their child or young person to understand and manage gender identity.

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About this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to help parents and carers understand gender identity and dysphoria in young people as well as how they can best support and advise them about this. It is completely normal for parents / carers to experience a wide range of emotions when managing these situations, they may feel shock and surprise if signs were not seen, as well as grief and loss for the young person they feel they are “losing” as a result of gender correction.

Some parents feel completely unaware as to how to help their child, and somewhat out of their depth, especially if they have had no prior experience with gender identity and dysphoria. These feelings, and others, are all completely normal and nothing to be embarrassed about.

We will start by discussing different terminology used when talking about gender identity as well as what these terms mean. We will then move on to focus on ways we can support young people both practically and emotionally.

Sex and gender

There are a number of different terms for gender and sex and it can be very confusing to understand the meanings. Below is a guide:

Sex / Gender at birth

This is the gender that is assigned to us at birth and is usually determined by looking at the external genitals of a baby (penis or vagina). It is the biological gender determined by our chromosomes and our DNA. Babies are usually either assigned male or female but occasionally this is not clear and the child may be referred to as intersex.

Gender identity

A person's gender identity is the gender they identify as. Sometimes this is different to the gender they were assigned at birth and sometimes an individual does not identify as either gender. Some different gender identities include:

Trans male—an individual who was assigned female at birth but identifies as male.

Trans female—an individual who was assigned male at birth but identifies as female.

Non binary—an individual who does not identify as either male or female or may identify as more than one gender.

Gender fluid—an individual who's gender identity changes, sometimes they identify as male, sometimes female and sometimes neither.

Cis gender—an individual who identifies as the same gender they were assigned at birth.

Neo gender—This is an umbrella term for any gender terms that have developed recently. It can also refer to pronouns other than she / her, he / him or they / them.

Androgyny— an individual who expresses both male and female characteristics simultaneously.

Gender expression

This is how an individual presents their gender to the outside world, how they behave and their likes / interests. Some people present as more male (masculine), some more female (feminine) and some fall somewhere in the middle. A person's gender expression does not always match their gender identity or their gender assigned at birth.

Gender dysphoria

Gender dysphoria a term used to describe distress a person may experience due to a mismatch between their gender identity (their personal sense of their own gender) and their sex assigned at birth.

Sexuality

This is the term to describe who a person is sexually attracted to. This is not connected to a person's gender at birth or their gender identity.

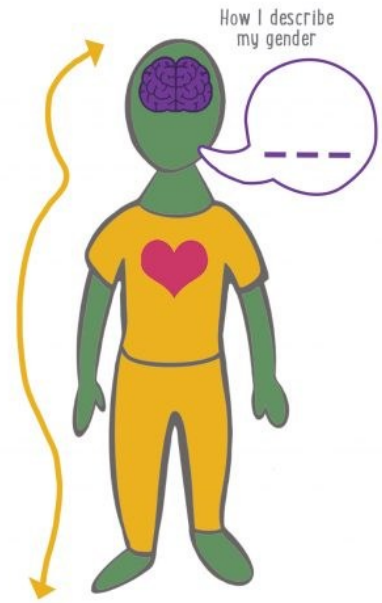
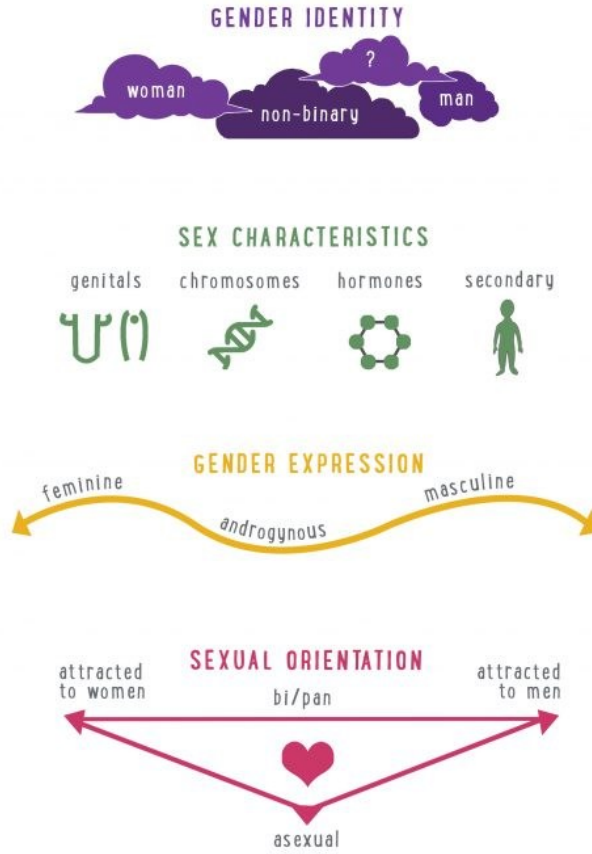
Pronouns and names

A pronoun is a term used to identify an individual when not using their given name. These are typically—he / him, she / her or they / them. Some people may use a combination of these or change them over time. It can be quite confusing when a person starts to use different pronouns than those you are used to using. It is always best to use the pronouns that an individual wants to use but it is ok if you forget or make a mistake. If this happens then correct yourself and apologise.

When a person identifies as a gender that is different from their gender assigned at birth, they often choose to use a different name to the one given to them at birth as well. Their birth name will often be referred to as a "dead name" and it is important to try to use the name they feel best suits their identity now. Again, it is ok if you make a mistake but the best course of action in this case is to correct yourself and apologise.



THE GENDERPERSON



sex/gender assigned at birth

● male/boy ● female/girl

Supporting a young person with their gender identity

The most important thing to do when supporting a young person who is struggling with their identity and their gender is to make sure to listen to them. Try to avoid asking leading questions and keep preconceptions to yourself. **If a young person chooses to speak to you about something sensitive like this it means that you are a trusted adult for them and they are reaching out to you for support, guidance and love.**

When supporting a young person, it is crucial to listen to how they want to progress. Let them be in control and move at their pace. Acknowledge the feelings of the young person - they may be unsure, insecure or worried, and it is important to validate those.

Show your young person empathy. While you may not understand exactly what they are going through, you don't have to completely "get it" to give them support. Try to understand the emotions they are experiencing behind their transition and try to empathise with these feelings rather than the bigger picture if this is easier for you.

Show your young person that you are willing to learn. Either ask the young person themselves or do some research online. There are some very useful links at the end of this toolkit that may help you understand more.

Be an advocate for your young person; help them to talk to others about their transitioning if they want you to and defend them if others treat them negatively. Make sure you stand up for their rights and help them stand up for themselves too.

Transitioning

This is the term used to describe the time during which an individual moves from using their gender assigned at birth as their gender identity to the gender identity that represents their true identity.

Everyone's transition journey is different. It may begin with choosing a new name and using different pronouns before they change their gender expression. They may also choose to experiment with their clothes / hair / makeup within the safety of their home before doing so when out in the community. There is no right or wrong method of transitioning; it should be done in a way that the young person is comfortable with and at the pace they choose. It should also be up to the young person who is told about their transitioning, when they are told and in what way. Research has shown that using a trans young person's chosen name and pronouns has a positive impact on their wellbeing, reducing symptoms of depression, thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts. So, after your young person has bravely shared their gender identity, name and pronouns with you, it is important that you use their name and pronouns.

It is understandable that you may make mistakes, especially during the early stages of their transition. You may have spent years referring to them by a different name and different pronouns, so initially you might make some mistakes and at times refer to your young person by their old name and/or misgender them. In these instances, correct yourself and apologise for the mistake. Your young person needs to see that you are learning and that you haven't ignored what they have shared with you. If another person uses the wrong name or misgenders your young person and does not apologise, it is important to politely correct them as this shows your young person that you are an advocate for them.

Trans rights in school

Your young person has the right to use the name and pronouns of their choosing. They have the right to decide who is aware that they are transitioning as well as how and when to tell them.

They can use whichever toilet they feel most comfortable in using or to have access to a gender neutral toilet if that's what they would prefer. They have a right to be taken seriously and to be supported while they are at school.

A young person does not need any documentation to prove that they are trans and they do not need to have undergone any medical or social changes. This is included in the Equality Act (2010). A young person does not need to put up with any transphobic bullying of any kind and safeguarding should be put in place to protect them from this.

Trans rights and healthcare

As a trans person, young people may need to access trans related healthcare. While hormone therapy and surgery is not available to people under the age of 16, they will need a letter from their GP if they wish to change their name on their passport or to get a referral to a gender identity clinic.

All young people should be referred to the National Referral Support Service for the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Service. These services specialise in helping young people with gender identity issues. They take referrals from anywhere in England and their website address can be found at the end of this toolkit.

Trans young people have the right to use the name and pronouns of their choosing while accessing healthcare. They do not need to go through mental health services and do not need documentation to prove they are trans. Young people have the right to be taken seriously and receive accurate information from their GP. They have the right to be referred to a gender identity clinic of their choice (either NHS or private).

Shopping with your young person

When a young person is transitioning, they may wish to buy and wear different clothing to align with their gender expression. When out shopping with your young person, it is important to be mindful of which departments within shops you visit. It may be habitual to revert to clothing departments that you have always visited in the past but it is important to be sensitive of this (especially when shopping for underwear). Ask your young person where they wish to look and also offer the option of online shopping if they would feel more comfortable with this.

Young people who were assigned the gender of female at birth may not wish to wear a bra or may want to hide their breasts as part of their gender expression. Extra care should be taken if looking into binders or trans tape online; while these products are available very cheaply on sites like Temu and may seem like an attractive option, it is important to exercise caution as such binders can cause pain, discomfort and actually injure the wearer. Some trans people recommend using trans tape rather than binders as a less restrictive and a healthier option for young people who are still growing. Please do your research along with the young person and source a reputable seller.

Resources

Some resources to complete with your young person to help them with their gender identity journey

Cup 'o' feelings

Ask your young person to complete one or more of the following activities. This will give you a good introduction to discussing emotions and feelings with them and also show you how they are feeling in general.

MY CUP-O-FEELINGS

Color inside this cup to show how much of each emotion you're feeling right now!
Use the blank spaces to pick other colors and feelings that you'd like.

YELLOW • Happy RED • Angry PINK • Hopeful PURPLE • Scared
ORANGE • Nervous GREEN • Excited BLUE • Sad BROWN • Surprised

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My FEELINGS

Choose 3 colors to represent: Often, Sometimes, and Never/Hardly Ever and color in the key below.

COLOR	I FEEL THIS WAY...
	Often
	Sometimes
	Never/Hardly Ever

Color in each of the feelings below based on how often you feel this way.
For a better understanding of the emotions listed, see the next page for an explanation of each emotion.

© Nicole Batiste

Name: _____

How I Feel

Color the emotion circles to show how you've been feeling lately.

	I feel this way often.
	I sometimes feel this way.
	I do not feel this way often.

happy	worried	angry	sad	relaxed
stressed	shy	goofy	nervous	confused
excited	hurt	playful	bored	safe
tired	proud	silly	lonely	confident

Feelings Quiz







Mental Health Center Kids

<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Fine	<input type="checkbox"/> Irritated	<input type="checkbox"/> Bored
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Confused	<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely	<input type="checkbox"/> Happy
<input type="checkbox"/> Tired	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Worried
<input type="checkbox"/> Scared	<input type="checkbox"/> Proud	<input type="checkbox"/> Tired	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealous
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick	<input type="checkbox"/> Nervous	<input type="checkbox"/> Sick	<input type="checkbox"/> Silly
<input type="checkbox"/> Bored	<input type="checkbox"/> Shy	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Bored
<input type="checkbox"/> Worried	<input type="checkbox"/> Tired	<input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed	<input type="checkbox"/> Sick
<input type="checkbox"/> Shy	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Nervous
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Happy	<input type="checkbox"/> Sick	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeful
<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeful	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely
<input type="checkbox"/> Surprised	<input type="checkbox"/> Shy	<input type="checkbox"/> Focused	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry
<input type="checkbox"/> Fine	<input type="checkbox"/> Proud	<input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/> Confused

How people see me

This is a good activity for young people to use to explore how they feel others see them and also how they see themselves. Young people can draw or write their answers in each box (younger children may need some help to complete this activity). Once they have completed the sheet, you can discuss their answers with them to understand how they feel and why they answered in the way that they did.

How people see me

		
How most of society sees me	How my friends see me	How my parents see me
		
how my close friends see me	How I see myself	Who I am

imgflip.com

My gender identity

My name is:

My pronouns are:

She / her

He / Him

They / Them

Variable (they change)

Pe / Per

Ze / Hir

Ey / Em

Other

My gender identity is:

My gender expression is:

Masculine

Feminine

Other

My gender at birth:

Male

Female

My feelings about this:

Other things about my gender expression e.g. hair / makeup:

This worksheet can be used to help young people communicate their feelings to a family member and may be especially useful when managing relationships with those that are not supportive of, or react negatively to their gender identity and transitioning.

Dear _____

Use this worksheet to explore your feelings towards a family member.

I feel the happiest with you when _____

It makes me angry when you _____

My favorite memory with you is when _____

My least favorite memory with you is when _____

Something that would need to change to improve our relationship would be _____



Using "I feel" statements can be an effective way for young people to effectively communicate their feelings and needs in an organised and concise way and can help them when advocating for themselves.

Assertive Communication

I-STATEMENTS

When I express myself with I-messages, I use a firm and gentle voice and communicate:

- 1 I FEEL**

My feelings about a behavior / situation
- 2 WHEN**

A blame-free description of the behavior that is a problem for me
- 3 BECAUSE**

The effect the behavior has on ME
- 4 (MY NEEDS)**

What I need the other person to do instead

EXAMPLE

I feel annoyed when you keep on checking if I've done my homework because it tells me you don't trust me. I need to be able to prove that I can do it on my own.

VERYSPECIALTALES.COM

Sources of Support

Online Support—The following organisations can provide advice and guidance for children and young people and many offer advice and for parents/carers.

National Referral Support Service for The NHS Gender Incongruence Service for Children and Young People - <https://www.ardengemcsu.nhs.uk/services/clinical-support/national-referral-support-service-for-the-nhs-gender-incongruence-service-for-children-and-young-people/>

The Proud Trust - <https://www.theproudtrust.org/>

Mermaids - <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

Barnardo's - <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/services/positive-identities-gender-space>

Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/gender-identity/>

Out of the can Swindon - <http://outofthecan.org/>

NHS LiveWell - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/trans-teenager/>

Friends of STEP Facebook Page - Here you can find useful resources covering a variety of topics
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStep/>