



Frequently Asked Questions About Gender Identity

What is Gender Identity?

Gender identity refers to a person's private sense of their own gender. Most people have a gender identity that is either male or female, but non-binary identities such as gender fluid and genderqueer are equally valid. Gender identity develops independent of physical anatomy and may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

What/who caused this?

The exact cause of transgender identity is not known, but current theories point towards biological influences such as prenatal hormone levels. We do know that nothing a parent does or does not do can cause a child to develop a transgender identity. Nothing can be done to cause, prevent or reverse a gender identity that does not match a child's assigned sex.

How can someone make such a life changing decision so young?

As opposed to sexual orientation which typically emerges during puberty, gender identity is established very early in life. The American Academy of Pediatrics has found that a child's gender identity is set by age 4. Nobody decides to be transgender. The only decision a transgender youth makes is whether to live authentically and honestly.

How can I know this isn't just a phase?

Many children do experiment with gender expression in play. However, there is a big difference between a boy who likes to play with 'girl things' and a child who actually says, "I *am* a girl." Once a child has consistently expressed a transgender identity, it is highly unlikely that will change throughout life.

Does this mean my child is gay?

Gender identity and sexual orientation develop independently of one another. Just like cisgender (non-transgender) people, transgender people can be gay, straight, bisexual, or any other sexual orientation. Being transgender is *not* the same as being "extra gay."

How common is this?

Prevalence studies show that transgender identity occurs in 1:333 births¹ and general gender nonconformity occurs 1:10 children².

¹ Winter, S. PhD., University of Hong Kong; Conway, L., PhD., University of Michigan; How Many Trans" People Are There? A 2011 Update Incorporating New Data, (2011)

² Harvard School for Public Health, *Pediatrics*, (2012)