

Supporting a young person with gender identity issues

Many people assume that the four distinct aspects to sex and gender should always align. This is not the case in real life.

- Biological (birth) sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender presentation

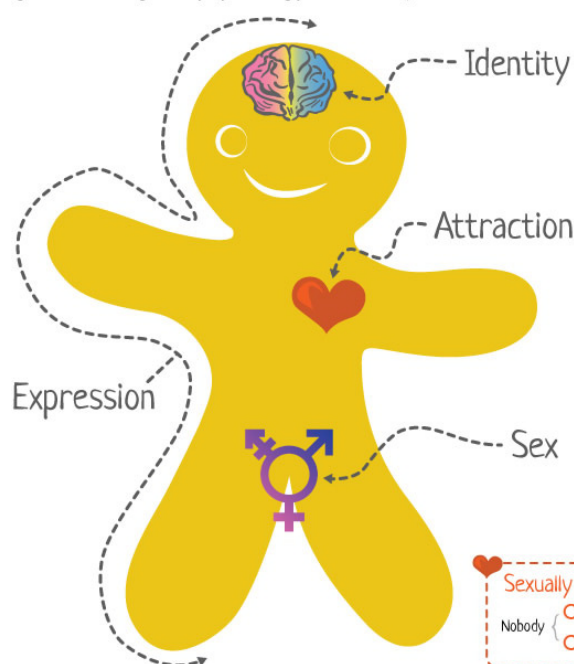
Gender Identity is not a simple binary. It spans a spread of possible positions.

- People whose sense of gender identity does not mesh closely with their body sex may identify as “trans”.
- They may seek medical support and hormone treatment.
- A smaller number may seek surgery.
- There are approximately equal numbers of female to male (FtM) and male to female (MtF) youngsters.

The Genderbread Person v3.3

by *it's pronounced* METROsexual.com

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more. In fact, that's the idea.



Plot a point on both continua in each category to represent your identity, combine all ingredients to form your Genderbread. 4 (of infinite) possible plot and label combos.

Gender Identity
How you, in your head, define your gender, based on how much you align (or don't align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.
Options: Woman-ness, Man-ness, "two-spirit", "genderqueer".

Gender Expression
The ways you present gender, through your actions, dress, and demeanor, and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.
Options: Feminine, Masculine, "androgynous", "gender neutral".

Biological Sex
The physical sex characteristics you're born with and develop, including genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones, chromosomes, etc.
Options: Female-ness, Male-ness, "intersex", "MtF Female".

Sexually Attracted to
Options: Nobody, (Women/Females/Femininity), (Men/Males/Masculinity).

Romantically Attracted to
Options: Nobody, (Women/Females/Femininity), (Men/Males/Masculinity).

⊖ indicates a lack of what's on the right.

For a bigger bite, read more at <http://bit.ly/genderbread>

In each grouping, circle all that apply to you and plot a point, depicting the aspects of gender toward which you experience attraction.

What to do once your child has raised a Gender Identity issue

- Stay calm at all times.
- Give yourself time to talk; don't rush the conversation.
- Be prepared to listen and acknowledge the young person's emotions and thoughts.
- Let your young person know you want to understand, help and support them.
- Let them know that you will seek extra support and advice when they are ready. Let your GP know with the agreement of your child.
- In the first instance, GPs should be able to support and refer to a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or to the highly specialist Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust who will work with the whole family.
- Seek support and information from Mermaids UK: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
- Seek out a local support group for parents and trans youngsters. Both you and your child will benefit enormously by meeting others.
- When the time is right, notify your child's school; do so via the head teacher or a senior member of staff.

Your child will be experiencing some or all of these:

- Nervous, anxious, terrified, lonely, vulnerable, unhappy.
- Why is this happening to me?
- What does the future hold for me? Will these feelings ruin my future?
- Everyone will ridicule me. I feel suicidal.
- What I feel isn't right according to other people. Is it sinful?
- Am I the only person to feel this way? I don't know anyone else like this.
- How do I tell my family and friends about these feelings?

Other things to be mindful of:

- Remind your child that you love and care about them; that you will get through difficulties together.
- Tell them you understand that they may be distressed and that you recognise that their emotional struggle is very real.
- Take care of yourself; have "you" time.
- Do not trust all you read on the web. In particular, many of the anti-trans articles and statistics are untrue.

**REMEMBER IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT: YOU HAVE NOT CAUSED THE GENDER IDENTITY ISSUE.
However family reactions and emotions need to be sensitively handled.**

Useful websites and helpline numbers:

NHS Gender Identity Service

Website: www.gids.nhs.uk

Tel: 020 8938 2030/1

Email: gids@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Mermaids UK

Website: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Tel: 0344 334 0550 (be prepared to leave a message)

Email: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk

Local Help and Support:

Hampshire Y Services for Young People in South Hants:

Dawn Tracy, LGBT Youth Worker

Email: dawn@yservices.co.uk

Tel: 07503 353636