

Gender Dysphoria

The word Dysphoria can be defined as a feeling of unpleasantness, discomfort, dissatisfaction, or restlessness. Gender Dysphoria is a term that describes a person who is uncomfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth and who identifies as the opposite gender. A person with Gender Dysphoria can experience depression and anxiety because of the dissatisfaction with their assigned gender.

It is important to understand that Gender Dysphoria is not a mental illness, and it should not be treated as such. What can be treated is the stress, leading to depression and anxiety, which sometimes come with it. Often, teens and young adults are affected by these symptoms. Signs that someone is experiencing Gender Dysphoria are:

- Feeling certain that he or she identifies with the opposite gender
- Dressing and presenting oneself as the opposite gender
- Wishing to be called by a different name or different pronouns
- Refusing to accept societally normal gender roles and expectations.
- Being disgusted by one's genitals and desiring to have the genitals of the opposite sex.

Being Supportive

For individuals who feel they should be a gender other than that which they were assigned, having support is very important. The support of siblings, parents, or even just a friend can make a big difference. Sometimes, the feeling of wishing to be of the opposite gender goes away as a person gets older. Sometimes, a person may want to undergo a gender reassignment surgery or take hormones in order to make their outward appearance reflect how they feel inside.

However, not everyone who experiences Gender Dysphoria desires to transition to the opposite gender.

Some people simply don't identify with socially normative gender identities. Showing as much support as possible to someone with Gender Dysphoria is critical, even if you may not agree with their decision to have gender reassignment surgery or present themselves as the opposite gender.

Ways to Show Support

If a friend or loved one is experiencing Gender Dysphoria, here are some ways you can show support:

- Listen to how they feel and let them know that their feelings are valid.
- Use the name or pronouns that they prefer. This is another way to show that you respect their feelings and their wishes.
- Do not try to force them or convince them to change the way they feel. You cannot force someone to accept and be comfortable with their biological sex if they are not.

Depression and Suicide

Lack of support, bullying, discrimination, or inability to access the means to transition can cause severe distress, depression, and anxiety for people with Gender Dysphoria. In teens with Gender Dysphoria especially, there are high rates of depression and suicide. If you know someone with Gender Dysphoria, do your best to make them feel accepted and supported. Many people with Gender Dysphoria still face prejudice and misunderstanding, and support and acceptance can help.

If You Need Help...

Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where someone is available 24 hours a day. For non-emergency services, call (810) 257-3742. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. www.genhs.org