

# Strategies in Facilitating Gender Transition in Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth

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## Session Overview

- ① Describe mental health concerns of TGNC youth during gender transition
- ② Discuss assessment strategies of gender dysphoria in late childhood and adolescence
- ③ Identify treatment strategies including counseling and psychotherapeutic interventions

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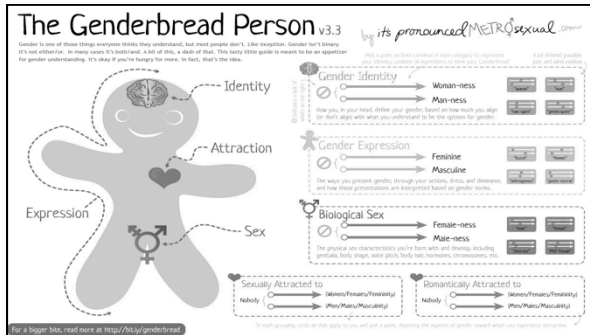
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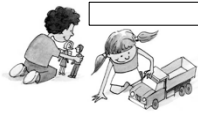
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## Gender

- Assigned gender
- Expressed gender
- Gender identity
- Gender development
  - Gender congruence (Typical)
  - Gender incongruence (Atypical) = Gender non-conformity



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## Gender Non-Conforming Behaviors

- A person displays behaviors associated with other genders or non-traditional gender behaviors
- Manifestations
  - A propensity to cross-dress
  - Refusal to participate in activities conventionally thought suitable for the assigned gender
  - The exclusive choice of playmate/peer of the identified gender

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## Gender Dysphoria

A strong and persistent desire to identify as another gender (e.g., wish to dress like another gender, dislike one's own physical anatomy)

A strong and persistent desire to eliminate their primary and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., an intense desire to do away with one's genitalia)

- In children
- In adolescents

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### Gender Dysphoria in DSM-5

A condition in which one experiences a marked incongruence between one's expressed and assigned gender for at least six months

- In children
- In adults and adolescents

Must be accompanied with clinically significant distress or impairment in important areas of functioning

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### Issues: DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria

Children can be diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria without verbalizing a desire to become the other (another) gender

Double standard (boys vs. girls)

Gender identity development

- Gender curiosity and exploration
- Gender diversity/fluidity vs. stability

Others

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### #ASSESSING GENDER DYSPHORIA

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**Assessment**

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Clinical interview and observation

- Parents/caregivers
- Child/Adolescent
- Others

Questionnaires/instruments

- Identification of gender variant behaviors (see Zucker, Wood, Singh, & Bradley, 2004)
- Comorbidity

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**Clinical Interview and Observation**

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- Acknowledges the struggles/challenges
- Attends to the family dynamics
- Evaluates parents/caregivers' understanding of gender dysphoria
- Listens carefully to the child/adolescent

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**Clinical Interview and Observation**

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- Observes significant behaviors
- Assesses the environment
- Rules out differential diagnosis
- Identifies other/related mental health concerns

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## #STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE GENDER TRANSITION

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### Gender Transition

A period in which a person begins living full time as and adopts gender role of a desired gender

- Psychological
- Social
- Hormonal
- Surgical




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Type	Meaning	Considerations	Examples
Psychological Transition	Preparing for coming out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, attainable, realistic expectations</li> <li>• Co-existing mental health concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering information</li> <li>• Seeking professional assistance</li> </ul>
Social Transition	Coming out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual transition</li> <li>• Abrupt transition</li> <li>• Profound impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coming out at school</li> <li>• Changing legal identity</li> </ul>
Hormonal Transition	Seeking Hormone Therapy (HT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully reversible interventions</li> <li>• Partially reversible interventions</li> <li>• Health risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving GnRH-a</li> <li>• Taking testosterone/estrogen</li> </ul>
Surgical Transition	Pursing reconstruction surgery(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irreversible interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast augmentation</li> <li>• Genital reconstruction</li> </ul>

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## Tasks of Mental Health Professionals



**WPATH** WORLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION for TRANSGENER HEALTH

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### Counseling and Support for Changes in Gender Role

- ① Clarifying and exploring gender identity and role
- ② Addressing the impact of stigma and minority stress on one's mental health and human development, and
- ③ Facilitating a coming-out process

(p. 184, Coleman et al., 2011)

Coleman, E., Bockting, W., Botzer, M., Cohen-Kettenis, P., DeCuypere, G., Feldman, J., ... Zucker, K. (2011). Standards of care for the health of transsexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming people, 7th version. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 13, 165-232. doi:10.1080/15532739.2011.700873

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### Approach to Support Transition

#### Gender congruence practice

- Promoting early transition
- Recommending the pursuit of GnRH-a

#### Gender affirmative practice

- Using child/person-led approach



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### Gender Affirmative Practice

- Understands that gender identity is fluid and is still forming
- Supports youth in whatever gender, or combination and fluctuation of genders, a child/teenager embraces
- Involves thoughtfully taking the child's lead and allowing the child/teen to explore her/his gender identity, often with the help of a knowledgeable mental health provider

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### Counselor Considerations

- Recognizes our own biases and assumptions regarding gender, gender identity, and sexuality
- Understands gender identity development and different treatment approaches
- Educates children/adolescents and families about the existing long-term outcome data on gender non-conforming youth
- Knows providers/referral sources in your area
- Seeks interprofessional collaboration

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### Summary

- An accurate diagnosis and a thorough assessment inform appropriate gender transition options
- A decision to pursue gender transition belongs to the child/adolescent/family
- Thoughtful clinical approach should be exercised when supporting gender transition in childhood and adolescence
- Affirming counselors are to consider various aspects concerning the child/adolescent/family
- Interprofessional collaboration is central to successful transition

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