



**Gender Minorities Aotearoa**

# Help! Is My Child Transgender?

## Ideas for parents of gender-questioning kids

Parents often come to us with stories and questions – most commonly their teenage child who they raised as a son has expressed feeling like a girl, or a desire to be a girl.

Parents often have deep emotional fears, and big questions, such as:

- He's getting teased about being a feminine boy, is that why he thinks he wants to be a girl? Is he just spending too much time with girls? Maybe he's gay?
- Will giving him more masculine hobbies help? Maybe more discipline?
- Why does he want a hard life as a transgender woman, what will happen to him?
- Is he going to make permanent changes to his body that he can't undo?
- Will he be a whole different person – will I lose my son?

### Is there another answer – something that's not being transgender?

First, one must understand that very few people question their own gender in this way. It is very uncommon for a person who is not transgender to reach a point where they are internally asking themselves 'Am I transgender?'. In our broad experience, the answer is almost always 'Yes'.

By the time children start puberty, they usually know how their gender feels, and will express it if they feel safe to do so.

Some people quote '80% of trans kids change their minds later', however this figure comes from poorly conducted and heavily biased research, and is incorrect. If allowed to transition (to outwardly express being transgender), less than 1% of trans people voluntarily go back because they feel they made a mistake about their gender.

### Why is my child transgender?

Forget everything you have seen in films. Gender is not caused by teasing, trauma, recreational activities, or friends. Being transgender is a natural variance, and many cultures all over the world recognise 3, 6, or more genders.

Your child is still going to be the same person they've always been, but probably a lot happier.

### What steps will my child take next?

Most young people will transition socially before anything else. This may involve things like changing their name, their hair, and their clothing. It might even mean redecorating their bedroom. This is something they can easily do without making any commitment to future changes.

Being able to socially transition is a huge relief to a transgender person, who has typically been living under enormous amounts of stress, anxiety, depression and often even suicidal feelings. 40%



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of trans gender students experience significant depressive symptoms, and 40% of transgender people attempt suicide. You can have a big impact on your child - most young trans people report dramatically improved mental health, stability, sense of self worth, and relationships with family if their family are supportive. This is a common place for teens to pause and enjoy.

**If your teenage child is expressing a desire to change their gender, it is absolutely essential that you actively support them to gently explore this further at their own pace, if they want to. Talk with your child, let them know you love them no matter what their gender, and it is ok to explore being another gender.**

### What about medical transition?

There is one more step that many teens desire to do as soon as possible – Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

HRT is prescribed by doctors, and consists of two main types of hormones. The first are puberty blockers. These pause puberty, and are commonly given to transgender teens. If your child is experiencing the growth of facial and body hair, the development of an adams apple, deepening of their voice, or possibly a receding hairline, anti-androgens will halt those effects of puberty – essentially blocking their testosterone from effecting their development in these ways.

If, in the future, your child stopped taking puberty blockers, those changes would simply begin again – puberty blockers do not make permanent changes, they only pause things.

The second type of hormones are usually prescribed at a later date if desired, and are often referred to as ‘cross sex hormones’. The main cross sex hormones prescribed to transgender patients are Oestrogen for people who were assigned ‘male’ at birth, or Testosterone for people who were assigned ‘female’ at birth. Oestrogen is primarily responsible for things like breast growth, skin softening, and fat distribution, while Testosterone is primarily responsible for things like deepening the voice, facial and body hair growth, and muscle mass. There is more information about these later steps on our website [genderminorities.com](http://genderminorities.com)

### What about bullying and mental health?

If your child is seen as ‘different’, they may be experiencing bullying. This is extremely common for transgender teens (1 in 5 trans students experience bullying on a weekly basis – this is 5 times higher than for non-trans students).

There may be times when you wish your child would simply try to fit in, and you must choose whether to join in telling them they are not good enough and they should change, or to accept your child for who they are and take a stand to demand respect and safety for your whanau.

We hope that this information is useful in assisting you to think about the best ways in which to support your child.



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For more information, please see our website.



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**[genderminorities@gmail.com](mailto:genderminorities@gmail.com)**

**[genderminorities.com](http://genderminorities.com)**

Other useful material available to download from our website includes -  
Youth'12 Fact Sheet about Transgender Young People  
Takataapui: Part of the Whanau  
Making Schools Safer for Trans and Gender Diverse Youth  
LGBTQI+ Aotearoa Then & Now Documentary



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First Steps: Shared Stories from parents and caregivers of trans\* and gender diverse children