



HEALTHY SEXUAL SOLUTIONS

Sexual Identity Disorder

What is Sexual Identity Disorder?

Sexual identity disorder, or gender dysphoria, is a condition in which a male or female feels a strong identification with the opposite sex. The individual may identify to the point of believing that they are, in fact, a member of the other sex who is trapped in the wrong body.

A person with this disorder often experiences great discomfort regarding his or her actual anatomic gender. People with gender identity disorder may act and present themselves as members of the opposite sex and may express a desire to alter their bodies. The disorder affects an individual's self-image, and can impact the person's mannerisms, behavior, and dress. Individuals who are committed to altering their physical appearance through cosmetics, hormones and, in some cases, surgery are known as transsexuals.

Gender identity disorder is a condition in which a person has been assigned one gender (usually at birth), but identifies as belonging to another gender, or does not conform with the gender role their respective society prescribes to them.

People with gender identity disorder frequently report their feelings as "having always been there", and the disorder can be evident in early childhood. Most people know whether they have a gender identity problem by the time they reach adolescence, although in some cases it seems to appear in adulthood.

Adults with gender identity disorder sometimes live their lives as members of the opposite sex. They tend to be uncomfortable living in the world as a member of their own biologic or genetic sex. They often cross-dress and prefer to be seen in public as a member of the other sex. Some people with the disorder request sex-change surgery.

There are two components of Gender Identity Disorder, both of which must be present to make the diagnosis. There must be evidence of a strong and persistent cross-gender identification, which is the desire to be, or the insistence that one is, of the other sex. This cross-gender identification must not merely be a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex. There must also be evidence of persistent discomfort about one's assigned sex or a sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex.

Gender identity disorder can affect children, adolescents, and adults. Individuals with gender identity disorder have strong cross-gender identification. They believe that they are, or should be, the opposite sex. They are uncomfortable with their sexual role and organs and may express a desire to alter their bodies. While not all persons with gender identity disorder are labeled as transsexuals, there are those who are determined to undergo sex change procedures or have done so, and, therefore, are classified as transsexual.

Identifying Gender Identity Disorder

Many transgender people do not regard their cross-gender feelings and behaviors as a disorder. They question what a "normal" gender identity or a "normal" gender role is supposed to be. Sometimes, even the very existence of a "normal" gender identity or gender role is examined, and often rejected by sectors of modern gender studies. They often point out that not everyone who is born male is stereotypically masculine, and not everyone born female is stereotypically feminine.

The current edition of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DSM) has several criteria that must be met before a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder can be given:

- 1) There must be evidence of a strong and persistent cross-gender identification. This cross-gender identification must not merely be a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex.
- 2) There must also be evidence of persistent discomfort about one's assigned sex or a sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex.
- 3) The individual must not have a concurrent physical intersex condition (e.g., androgen insensitivity syndrome or congenital adrenal hyperplasia).
- 4) There must be evidence of clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

In children, the disturbance is manifested by repeatedly stated desire to be, or insistence that he or she is, the other sex. In boys, preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire. In girls, insistence on wearing only stereotypical masculine clothing. There is usually strong and persistent preferences for cross-sex roles in make believe play or persistent fantasies of being the other sex, an intense desire to participate in the stereotypical games and pastimes of the other sex, and usually a strong preference for playmates of the other sex.

In boys, there is the assertion that his penis or testes are disgusting or will disappear or assertion that it would be better not to have a penis, or aversion toward rough-and-tumble play and rejection of male stereotypical toys, games, and activities. In girls, rejection of urinating in a sitting position, assertion that she has or will grow a penis, or assertion that she does not want to grow breasts or menstruate, or marked aversion toward normative feminine clothing.

In adolescents and adults, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as a stated desire to be the other sex, frequent passing as the other sex, desire to live or be treated as the other sex, or the conviction that he or she has the typical feelings and reactions of the other sex. Additionally, the adolescent or adult has a preoccupation with getting rid of primary and secondary sex characteristics (request for hormones, surgery, or other procedures to physically alter sexual characteristics to simulate the other sex).