

being gay/lesbian, or ashamed of being somewhat transgressive. Ultimately, the straight/gay language fails, because in the real world it can be much more complicated! Sexual orientation responds to the gender of the person to whom you feel attraction, not their biological sex. If a man is attracted to women (trans or cis) but feels no attraction to men, he is probably heterosexual. If a man is attracted to women (trans or cis) as well as men, he is probably bisexual. The best approach is to listen to what your heart tells you, even if there isn't a perfect language for it. There are some simple guidelines to follow to make sure you are being a good partner:

****Treat people with respect. This includes respecting them as the gender to which they identify, and maintaining the correct pronouns.**

****Don't make assumptions about them sexually or in terms of lifestyle and future plans. Be clear about what you're looking for, and if they're looking for something very different, trying to press forward into a relationship is going to make one or both of you very unhappy.**

****Trans people usually want the same things that cis people want - things like kindness, manners, courtesy, good humour, interesting conversation and similar interests and relationship styles.**

****Trans people sometimes live in "stealth," meaning that they don't really want the world to know that they're trans. They might be sensitive about having anything "out" them publicly and you should be considerate of that.**

****It's rude to ask someone if they've had surgery or what their genitals look like. Your partner can volunteer this information if and when they are comfortable to do so.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITIONING!

This pamphlet uses the term “trans” as an umbrella term to refer to all people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Terms that are sometimes used elsewhere include transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, and many others. There are sometimes very specific reasons for selecting specific terms, but for the most part, this pamphlet leaves language up to individuals to determine for themselves. Being trans is an individual path, where the only rule is that one does what one needs to in order to be at peace with themselves.

It is important to recognize that there is more than one possible way to experience trans identity:

1. Individuals may be assigned male or female at birth, but identify with the other gender and need to change their appearance and/or medically transition to reflect the person they understand themselves to be.

2. Individuals might not really see themselves as fully male or fully female – or at least not according to the social conventions typically attributed to those genders – but rather as in between to some degree, or else completely independent of gender.

Because the two often overlap, and a person might experience both to some degree, trans people cannot be neatly separated into two separate categories, and instead form a wide spectrum.

removal of the testicles and is usually done for trans women at the time of gender reassignment surgery (GRS). GRS surgeons discourage the practice of having orchidectomy prior to surgery (some even refuse to perform GRS if this is the case), as current methods tend to destroy valuable tissue that they use in their procedure. For women who decide not to have GRS, an orchidectomy can be a viable way to lower testosterone levels in the body

Vaginoplasty is a surgical procedure that essentially converts penile and scrotal tissues into a vagina, clitoris, and labia. A deep opening is created midway between the urethra and the anus, and skin taken from the penis and scrotum are used to line the vagina. The urethra is shortened and fixed in place and a clitoris is made with the skin and nerves from the glans (head of the penis). This procedure is usually combined with labiaplasty that further refines the labia and external vaginal area. Vaginoplasty has a high success rate, as the procedure has been well-refined by surgeons. This procedure requires extensive after-care, but usually results in functional genitals with typical urination and sexual capabilities.

Some Notes for Trans Attracted People

Trans-attracted people can be controversial in the transgender community, since some people who openly search for trans partners haven't been very respectful or understanding. Nobody likes to feel like they're being fetishized. However, trans attraction is a legitimate form of sexual attraction, and hopefully as awareness of this increases and there is more formation of understanding of and community for trans admirers, this may change. Trans admirers are often confronted with their own sense of homophobia with regards to themselves, either afraid of possibly

behind the muscle. Breast implants can be filled with a saline solution or a silicone gel. These variables can be decided based on the recommendation of your doctor and according to your body type, size of implants and how easily you scar. Incision sites in the armpit or around the nipple can reduce scar visibility. If you are doing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), you may wish to wait until your breasts have finished growing before deciding whether to have breast augmentation.

There are two types of facial hair removal. Laser hair removal employs pulsating light beams directed at the hair follicle. This heats the melanin in the hair causing it to burn and thus the follicle temporarily stops producing hair. This method does not work on lighter hair colors (i.e. red, blond, white and gray) and can take up to eight treatments over the course of months. Some patients will need follow-up treatments, especially on large areas. During electrolysis, a tiny needle is inserted into the skin and deep into an individual hair follicle. Then, a low-level electrical pulse is sent into the follicle to destroy it. The existing hair falls out, and the process is repeated hair by hair. Electrolysis is less expensive but requires more treatments over a long period of time. Do your homework before choosing a laser centre, or electrologist, as these industries are often unregulated.

The tracheal shave is a surgical procedure in which the thyroid cartilage is reduced in size by shaving down the cartilage through an incision in the throat to reduce the appearance of the Adam's Apple.

Orchidectomy (also called orchietomy or castration) is the

Gender identity refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the gender assigned at birth. Gender expression refers to outward expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms. Who a person is and how they need to live are self-driven questions.

A trans person might decide (*or in some cases severely need*) to medically transition if they experience body dysphoria (anxiety caused by a person's body configuration), which can be anywhere from unconscious aversion to a source of severe distress that might even drive someone to self-harm. They might also decide to do so if they feel that it is a necessary step to achieve personal closure and to help them socially integrate. Another person might not experience distress, but instead need to find some mode of gender expression that better represents who they are, without (or regardless of) medical interventions.

Gender Diversity: Defining Some Terms

Not everyone feels comfortable within a strict binary of "male" / "female." Some willfully reject such a binary in defining their own identity, or object to gender stereotypes.

Gender neutral pronouns are becoming increasingly common. They can include sie / xe / ze (usually pronounced "zee") and hir / zir (usually pronounced "heer"), and an honorific that is increasing in usage is "Mx." Many people simply use the singular form of "they" to avoid using gendered pronouns (he or she).

Intersex is sometimes included as a trans categorization, but actually refers to a number of birth conditions in which gender variance can occur. This might include physical variance in gender characteristics, chromosomal differences or medical conditions. It should be understood that not everyone who is intersex is transgender. It may depend on if a surgery to assign gender was performed at birth, and / or whether the gender one lives or was assigned to is consistent with their identity.

The practice of assigning gender to intersex infants at birth urgently needs to cease, because of the life-long damage that it causes for those intersex children who become assigned to a gender that they later do not identify with. Intersex people who are assigned to a gender to which they do not identify should have the right to correct this through gender reassignment, hormones or other corrective treatments if desired again remembering that their aim may sometimes be somewhere in between expectations of "male" and "female" if that is where they understand that they belong), and that these need to be recognized as medically-necessary procedures.

The term **two-spirit** is also sometimes wrongly included as a trans variation. This is a misappropriation of an important cultural concept. Two-spirit refers to a collection of Aboriginal traditions that allow for gender-diverse expression and sexuality, covering the full range of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, as well as intersex and other gender-variant people. Historically, traditions varied greatly among different tribes. Two-spirit is a blanket term created in 1990 to encompass the wide range of beliefs among Native peoples. The term two-spirit should *only* be used by those who identify as Aboriginal, Native American or Metis.

for erectile function. A third surgery is required to construct the testicles. Phalloplasty has not been as well-refined as vaginoplasty and satisfaction with the results varies more greatly.

Clitoral release is another alternative. Testosterone causes the clitoris to grow, sometimes as long as 2-3". The surgeon can release the clitoris from the body to give more length and make it feel more like a small penis. The vagina and urethra are not touched for this operation.

Metoidioplasty involves performing a clitoral release, as well as further procedures to reconfigure the rest of the genitals. The vagina is closed off by scraping the lining out of it and letting it collapse and heal shut. The outer labia is used to make a scrotum. The urethra is extended to the tip of the new penis using the vaginal lining for the inside of it. This surgery results in a small penis but normally with excellent sensation.

Trans Women

Breast augmentation is a surgical procedure involving the placement of breast implants to increase the size and improve the shape of the breasts. Trans women usually get some breast development from long-term hormone therapy. Those who desire larger breasts than the hormones produced can explore having breast augmentation surgery. It may be covered by insurance, depending on the guidelines of your provider. There are several common methods of performing breast augmentation. An incision is made in the armpit, around the areola, or in the crease under the breast. The implant is then inserted into a pocket formed either between the skin and the pectoral muscle, or

depends on the individual and they will fade with time. The surgical method chosen will depend on the body type of the patient and the skills/preferences of the surgeon. In general, guys with larger chests will benefit most from the double incision method, while guys with smaller chests can opt for the keyhole procedure.

Some trans men may also decide to get a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) and oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries). After starting testosterone, menstrual periods stop and the ovaries atrophy and stop producing estrogen, but sometimes cramps and other problems develop. Some people decide to have the uterus and ovaries removed entirely to reduce the risk or occurrence of these problems. Hysterectomy can be performed traditionally (through a long incision on the abdomen which will leave a scar) or laparoscopically (using a camera and tools inserted into a few small incisions which will leave less visible scarring). If a trans man chooses not to have a hysterectomy/oophorectomy procedure, he should continue to have regular Pap smears (to screen for cervical cancer) and should seek out the care of a doctor if he experiences any irregular vaginal bleeding.

Gender reassignment surgery for trans men can be done in a number of different ways, depending on the results wanted by the patient.

Phalloplasty is the only surgery that results in a full-size penis, and is performed in three stages. A penis is constructed using skin grafts from the forearm or thigh, nerves are attached to the clitoral nerve, and an extension to the urethra is artificially constructed. In the next stage, a manually-operated erectile implant is installed

Two-spirit tradition existed freely in North America as late as 1930, before being driven into hiding or shame by the changes that crept across North and Central America over the past two centuries of colonization. In the last centuries, modern Christianity has "evangelized," indoctrinated and destroyed many Native traditions, and two-spirit people are only now just re-emerging from homophobic and racial stigmas.

Cisgender, or "cis" (*pronounced* "sis") for short, refers to people whose gender identity corresponds with the gender assigned to them at birth and who do not identify as trans.

"Am I Trans?"

If a person is questioning or soul-searching through their life experiences to look for a direction, "am I trans" may not be the question to ask themselves. Too often society builds up a language, then defines it very specifically, and then looks for ways to make life fit the word. In reality, the words are only tools to communicate our lives – not the road maps for our lives. The question instead should be "what do I need to be at peace with myself?" Sometimes, the weight of one's life experiences and sense of self point to the need for a life change; other times, modifications to one's life and how they express themselves is enough to bring personal comfort and resolution.

Experiment, and listen to your heart. In an ideal world, as long as one is living responsibly and ethically, the rest shouldn't matter, and a person should have the right to determine who they are. Of course, we don't live in an ideal world, so other factors such as safety, job security and family pressure may influence your choices.

Medical Transition

The following assumes that you are interested in or considering medically and/or socially transitioning. Transition is in fact not the only choice available to you. No choice is an invalid choice, and each step (presentation, identity, medications, surgery) is its own decision. The only rule is that you do what you personally need to do in order to be happy.

If you need to transition, the requirements to begin the process varies greatly in different countries, states and cities. It is difficult to summarize here, but we will try to give an overview of the medical steps you can decide to take. The waiting lists for the doctors who oversee this process can be extremely long, so be prepared for a long journey.

It is a good idea to get out into the trans community, meet like-minded folks, and get a good feel for whether this is for you. Chances are, you'll meet some great, supportive people, get a wide array of information and some idea of where you can be on the other side of this journey. It is invaluable to have people to turn to who have already experienced this process.

Gender Specialists

Some jurisdictions consider transition a mental health issue, and you may have to find a psychiatrist who is experienced with treating Gender Identity Disorder (GID). To see them, you will need a referral from your family doctor / general practitioner (or walk-in

to undergo roughly a year living and working full-time as one's identified gender before being able to access gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy and other procedures. This period of time is sometimes referred to as Real Life Experience. For this and other reasons, the WPATH-SOC is a highly controversial and often maligned document among patients seeking medical intervention, who state that their legally protected right to proper medical care and treatment is unjustly and unduly withheld or even denied based on these standards.

Surgeries

These can differ from person to person according to desired outcome. Many of the smaller procedures are considered cosmetic (and therefore non-essential) by insurance companies though, and the costs of these are the responsibility of the person transitioning. Those that are more often covered by insurance include gender reassignment surgeries, chest reconstruction and breast augmentation, and hysterectomy, but the surgeon may insist on a referral from a psychologist before approving the operation. These procedures are invasive, carry risks and will have a recovery period. Discuss these things carefully with your doctor.

Trans Men

Chest reconstruction surgery (also called mastectomy or top surgery) is the removal of excess breast tissue and skin to create a flat, masculinized chest. This is performed either with a double incision (two incisions under the pecs) or keyhole incision (incisions are made around the areola). There will be scars, but how visible they will be

produced by the first naturally-occurring puberty, which may necessitate surgery or out-patient procedures (see below).

For trans women, HRT may include a combination of estrogen, progestogens, antiandrogens, and gonadotropin-releasing hormones. Common effects of HRT include growth of breasts, redistribution of body fat, and thinning of the skin. Breast development is a long process, taking years. The amount of growth is determined largely by genetics. Growth will not increase or occur faster by increasing hormone dosage. Other effects may include decreased libido and erectile function, infertility, changes in mood, change in body odor and reduced muscle development. Body hair will reduce and lighten, but facial hair will not change with HRT.

For trans men, HRT consists primarily of testosterone, with gonadotropin-releasing hormones. Common effects include increased muscle development, redistribution of body fat, deepening of the voice, development of facial and body hair, enlargement of the clitoris, and cessation of ovulation and menstruation. Other effects may include male pattern baldness, increased libido, change in body odor and acne.

Standards of Care and Real Life Experience

Many medical practitioners are obliged to follow the *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People* set by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH-SOC), formerly known as the Benjamin Standards of Care. Often a person is required by government healthcare programs or private insurance companies

clinic doctor), or a psychologist or psychiatrist. Once the referral is sent, you may still have to wait a long time for your appointment. One way to cope with the waiting period is to proceed as best you can with transition with your family doctor's assistance and / or peer support. Coming out to family and friends, name changes, hair removal, and changing outward presentation are all things that can be done before starting a medical process, and they can take a considerable amount of time.

Hormones

After a referral from a gender specialist, it is often an endocrinologist who prescribes the hormones. Family doctors certainly can, but many are reluctant to, sometimes because of training limitations. If a person has another medical condition (i.e. diabetes or HIV) or other medications that they need to take, it might also be recommended to see an endocrinologist. Whatever the case may be, it is important to monitor endocrine levels, especially within the first year, and it is important to have the relevant blood tests done and follow up with your doctor, as improperly-maintained hormone levels can affect your health severely. Hormones are either injected, applied to the skin with patches or creams, or occasionally delivered through other methods.

It is not recommended to take "black market" (non-prescribed) hormones. However, if you do start doing so, please discuss this with your doctor, so that your health can be monitored.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) changes the balance of sex hormones in the body. Its purpose is to cause the development of the secondary sex characteristics. It cannot undo many of the changes

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