

PFLAG TACOMA TRANSGENDER

WHO IS TRANSGENDER

According to the Williams Institute roughly 0.3% or 3 out of 1000 of the adults in the US are transgender (trans*). The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) estimates that between 0.25% and 1% of the population is transgender.

Even very young children often know that the gender which they actually are is opposite that which was assumed they are at birth, based on their genitals.

It is not at all uncommon for older adults to finally figure out that what has been bothering them for so many years is that they are trans* or more specifically, transsexual.

Many people say that they have never met anyone who is trans* before. Most likely this perception is incorrect as trans* people are just like everyone else, coming in all ages, sizes, shapes, colors, and religious beliefs.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSGENDER

Transgender (Trans*) is an umbrella term which includes trans men and trans women whose binary gender identity is the opposite of their assigned sex and who are

sometimes specifically termed transsexual if they desire medical assistance to transition. Trans* also includes crossdressers, drag kings and queens, and gender queer people, people whose identities are not exclusively masculine or feminine. Trans* also includes third-gender people such as genderqueer people who may identify as bigender, pan gender, or gender.

Trans* people experience a mismatch between their gender identity or gender expression and their assumed gender based their assigned sex at birth. NOTE: Gender, sex, and sexuality are all very different. A simple way to look at these terms is that a persons sex is determined by their genitals while gender is how a person perceives themselves in their own mind. Sexuality refers to who we are attracted to.

Being transgender is independent of sexual orientation. Trans* people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, etc. or may consider conventional sexual orientation labels as inadequate or inapplicable.

Many trans* people experience a period of identity development that includes gaining a better understanding of their self-image, self-reflection, and self-expression. This process may take months, years, or even decades. The degree to which individuals feel genuine, authentic, and comfortable with their external appearance and accept

their genuine identity is referred to as transgender congruence.

IS A TRANSGENDER PERSON MENTALLY ILL?

No, transgender people are not mentally ill but this remains a common stereotype. Gender Identity Dysphoria (GID) is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Current Edition (DSM-V), a guide used by mental health professionals to diagnose psychological conditions.

Gender dysphoria or gender identity disorder (GID) is the formal diagnosis used by psychologists and physicians to describe people who experience significant dysphoria (discontent) between the sex and gender they were assigned at birth. Evidence suggests that people who identify with a gender different from the one they were assumed to have at birth may do so not just due to psychological or behavioral causes, but also biological ones related to their genetics, the makeup of their brains, or prenatal exposure to hormones.

Transgender identity is not a mental illness that can be cured with treatment.

Transgender people experience a persistent and authentic difference between their assigned sex and their understanding of their own gender. For some people, this leads to emotional distress. This pain often can be relieved by freely expressing their own gender, wearing clothing they are comfortable in, assuming a societal role of

the gender with which they identify, and, for some, making a physical transition, hormonal and/or genitally, from one gender to another.

For those people who identify as transsexual, counseling alone, without medical treatment, hormones and/or genital corrective surgery, is often not effective. Trans* people often experience discrimination and violence in their families, schools or in their communities. A lifetime of this can be very challenging and can sometimes cause anxiety disorders, depression and other psychological illnesses. These are **NOT** the root cause of their transgender identity; rather, they are the side effects of society's intolerance of transgender people.

HOW SHOULD I REACT? WHAT IS A NORMAL REACTION?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Peoples reactions upon learning that a friend, loved one, or stranger is transgender run the gamut from disgust and hatred to unqualified acceptance. There is no "normal" reaction. It is not unlikely to feel a combination of confusion, disbelief, a profound sense of loss, embarrassment, anxiety, shame, guilt for having caused or done something wrong which caused the person to be trans. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

What you can do is educate yourself.

- The resources listed in this pamphlet may be helpful
- Talk and listen respectfully to the person who has come out to you. Try your best to have an open mind
- Read: understand what it means to be transgender- knowledge is power.
- See a counsellor or therapist who is specifically experienced with gender identity issues. -remember, there are no silly or stupid questions other than those unasked!
- Be kind to yourself; give yourself time to understand
- Join a support group such as the Tacoma PFLAG transgender support group.

RESOURCES

<http://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-transgender-people-faq>

<https://community.pflag.org/transgender>

<http://transequality.org/issues/resources/a-blueprint-for-equality-a-federal-agenda-for-transgender-people-2015>

<http://www.translifeline.org>

<https://community.pflag.org/document.doc?id=921&erid=8427515>

<http://transequality.org/know-your-rights/schools>

<https://transgenderequality.wordpress.com/2011/11/16/new-resource-glsen-and-ncte->

model-district-policy-on-transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-students/

<http://transstudent.org/downloads/ModelDistrictTransandGNCPolicyFINAL.pdf>

<http://www.aclu-il.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Resources-for-Transgender-Youth-FINAL.pdf>

<http://community.pflag.org/freepublications>

<http://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Transgender/zgbs/books/292220>

<http://www.rainbowcntr.org>