



American College of Pediatricians

www.BestforChildren.org

Patient Information Handout

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH GENDER IDENTITY DISTRESS

Advice to parents from a therapist critical of gender ideology:

“As you seek out support, I invite you to do something incredibly difficult: try meeting your daughter or son where s/he is right NOW. Rather than clinging to the memory of who s/he was last year, last month, or even last week, get to know who s/he is becoming right now, even if it scares you - even if you desperately miss the more familiar child from your memories. Be patient, take it one day at a time, and remember that s/he is doing the best s/he can with the tools s/he has right now. By being open to your child's thoughts, ideas, and feelings, you will help validate your child as a person, without having to validate the trans-identity. All children need to know that their parents love them and will not abandon them.”

Visit this valuable online parent community:

<https://www.kelseycoalition.org/>

A second online support group for parents with children who seemed to display Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD): <https://www.parentsofrogdkids.com/>

How to Find a Gender Ideology-Critical Therapist in your local area:

Due to the political climate, finding gender ideology-critical therapists can be a challenge. Below are suggestions to help you in your search:

1. Avoid "Gender therapists," "Gender-Affirming" therapists, "LGBT-Affirming" therapists, and "Gender clinics"

These are all titles of therapists who seek to validate and affirm your child's gender disturbance as normal. Consider searching for experts in body image & eating disorders, self-harm, trauma, anxiety disorders, women's issues, sexual abuse & domestic violence. You know your teen best. If your child has struggled with depression their whole life, seek an expert in teen depression. If he or she has obsessive-compulsive tendencies, seek out an OCD expert.

Therapists who practice Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) focus on helping clients accept natural emotions, like pain and suffering, and live value-driven lives. Jungian analysts, psychodynamic and psychoanalytic therapists may take a more nuanced and symbolic approach to your child's declaration, viewing it as an attempt to seek meaning and validation in their life, or as a psychological defense mechanism. Somatic therapies are particularly adept at addressing dissociation which is a disconnected relationship with the body.

Seek out specialists like these by entering "[Type of therapist] in [city]" into your search engine. For example, "Jungian Therapists in San Francisco."

2. Avoid therapists who shame or blame your child.

One therapist asked a 13-year-old, "Don't you see how selfishly you are behaving and how that is hurting your mother?" To the mother's credit, she sought out a new therapist.

A moralistic, shame and blame approach is not psychologically helpful. Instead, it teaches the youth that he or she is bad and simply being disobedient. Actually, the youth's belief or desire to dissociate from his or her sex is a real psychological reaction to either objective or perceived trauma (shame, blame, rejection, attachment loss, social contagion). Youth are not consciously choosing to feel this way to spite those around them.

Therapy should seek to uncover what psychological purpose the "trans" identity serves; what possible events and/or relationships may be contributing to it. Sometimes parents' well-intended behaviors may have contributed to the gender dysphoria. Barring rare cases of objective abuse, therapists should not "take sides." Good therapists will help parents and children better understand themselves and each other, improving family communication and family connectedness in the process.

3. Interview your potential therapists.

Ask them if they believe trans identities are innate, fixed, and treatable only with medical or chemical intervention. If they do, avoid them. Ask them directly about how they help children in your child's situation. Therapists are ethically obligated to be transparent when describing their therapeutic methods. If a therapist ever pressures you with the claim that your child must "transition or else become a suicide statistic" leave with your child. This is not a true statement!

4. If you seek a Christian therapist, you may find one by visiting these sites.

Realize, however, that you should also interview them as above.

<https://www.christiancounselordirectory.com/>

<https://www.catholictherapists.com/>

For more information visit <https://www.acpeds.org/>