

Are You Wondering About Your Gender?

Objective

To explore your feelings about your gender identify and how to seek help if you need it.

You Should Know

Some teens feel a strong “mismatch” between the physical gender they were born with and the gender with which they identify. Psychologists call this “gender dysphoria.” You might be uncomfortable with your body, and you might want to keep your thoughts and feelings a secret. You may believe that there is something wrong with you because you feel this way. Sometimes this leads to problems like depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, substance abuse, or eating disorders.

Finding support is essential, including access to information about gender dysphoria for your family.

Some people with gender dysphoria choose hormone therapy, surgery, and other medical interventions to better match their self-perception with their physical bodies. Other people, however, do not pursue medical intervention and choose to dress or behave as someone of their preferred gender. Resolving your confusion about your gender can be a long process, but it begins with an understanding of how you feel about yourself and how you want to be perceived by others. In this worksheet, you will explore your feelings about your gender identity.

What to Do

Are you confused about your gender? Here are some typical statements made by teens exploring their gender identity. Review each item, note YES or NO, then write a few sentences related to each item.

Note: “Primary sex characteristics” refer to the organs for reproduction. Males have testicles, females have a uterus and ovaries. “Secondary sex characteristics” refer to traits characterized by hormonal changes, particularly during puberty. Examples include breasts, facial hair, the growth of pubic hair and underarm hair, and voice changes.

_____ I feel like I was born the wrong gender.

I first noticed these feelings at the age of _____.

_____ I strongly dislike my genitals and characteristics associated with my assigned gender (e.g., facial hair or breasts).

_____ I avoid activities that require me to look at or touch my genitals, such as sexual activity, taking showers, etc.

_____ I strongly believe that my feelings and reactions are more like the opposite gender of my assigned gender (birth gender).

_____ I wish that others would treat me and refer to me as my preferred gender, not my assigned gender.

_____ I like to dress (or wish I could dress) or alter my external appearance to match my gender preference and to pass as that gender.

_____ I wish I could live as my preferred gender.

_____ I would be happier if I had the primary sex characteristics of the opposite gender.

_____ I would be happier if I had the secondary sex characteristics of the opposite gender.

_____ I think about having medical procedures to physically alter my sexual characteristics.

_____ I wish that the people in my life would treat me the same way as they treat males (if your assigned gender is female) or females (if your assigned gender is male).

_____ I avoid school or other activities as a result of my concerns about my gender identity.

_____ I feel bad or ashamed of my feelings of confusion about my gender identity.

Next, answer the following questions to further guide your assessment of your gender identity concerns.

Have you ever told anyone about your feelings? If so, who? And when?

What was their reaction? How did their reaction affect you? Describe below.

If you have told someone and felt judged or dismissed, who could you tell now who might be safe?

Have you ever sought professional counseling or consultation for your feelings and concerns? What was the outcome? Describe below.

Experts recommend professional counseling for teens who are confused about their gender. If you feel you are ready to consult with a professional to discuss your concerns, ask your parents or other adults who care about you for help in finding a counselor who is an expert in this field. You can also seek advice from a pediatrician familiar with gender identity issues. Many resources exist on the Internet, such as www.pflag.org, www.genderspectrum.org.

Reflections on This Exercise

What was the hardest part about doing this exercise?

What was surprising to you about doing this exercise?

What would you like to do as your next step in exploring your gender identity concerns?

What can you do to increase your self-acceptance?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
