



# **MY BODY DOESN'T FEEL LIKE ME:**

**Gender Dysphoria Explained**



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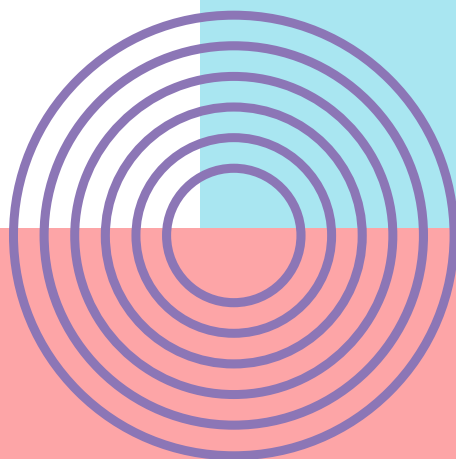
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This booklet has been co-produced by the Colchester Trans+ Focus Group at The OutHouse. A special thank you for their hard work and insight.



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# INTRODUCTION

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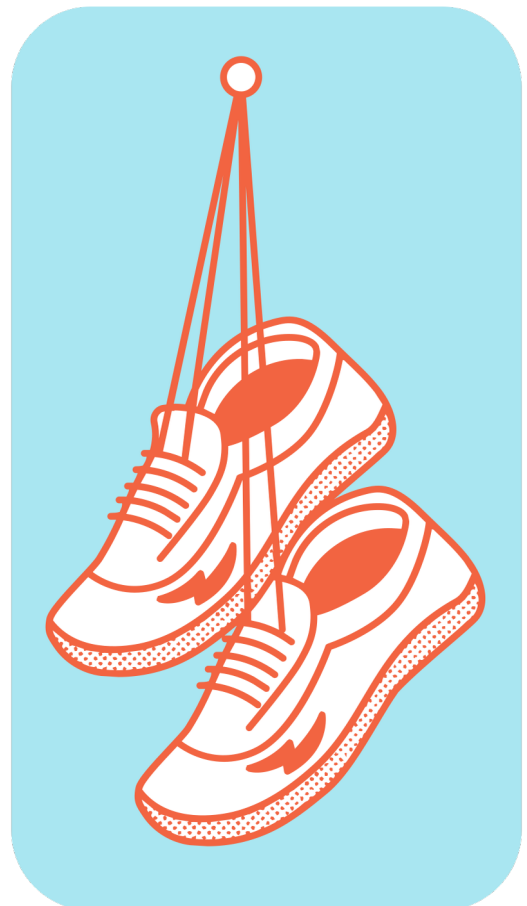


**Have you ever had a pair of shoes that didn't fit quite right?**

Everybody you see is walking around just fine, not even thinking twice about the fit of their shoes, but all you can think about is how uncomfortable your feet are, it's ruining your day! Some things are only noticeable when they're wrong. That's somewhat akin to what it feels like to experience gender dysphoria.

This guide is aimed at anyone interested in learning more about what gender dysphoria is, how it can affect people, and why it can cause somebody discomfort in how they interact with the world (and how the world interacts with them!).

You can choose to read through each section in order, or skip to the topics that are most relevant for you. Either way, this booklet aims to educate and spread awareness of diverse gender experiences.



## Gender Dysphoria

is defined as "The very deep feeling of extreme anxiety and unhappiness that some people experience when their body or other people's treatment of them does not match their gender identity"\*.

# DEFINITION OF GENDER

## D Y S P H O R I A

### What this means

is that some people feel their assigned sex at birth doesn't match their experienced gender, which can lead to feelings of severe discomfort and distress.

Those feelings are gender dysphoria.

### To alleviate that distress

someone might transition to living and presenting in a way that they feel more closely matches their true experienced gender.



\*Cambridge Dictionary

# UNDERSTANDING GENDER IDENTITY

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Gender identity is something that everybody has. For most people, their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. For others it doesn't. This can be something that you realise early in life, or later on. Once you do realise, looking back you might notice there were signs you hadn't given too much thought to before. Not everyone's gender identity will match perfectly with male or female. Gender isn't binary. It is deeply personal to the individual, and some may feel they don't have a binary gender. They could be non-binary, genderfluid, or agender.

It's worth mentioning that gender identity is different from gender expression. Whereas gender identity is how you feel in regards to your gender, gender expression is how you outwardly express it. This can include behaviour, or outward appearance such as clothing, hair, makeup, body language, and voice. Again, for many people gender identity and expression will match in a traditional sense, but for some there will be differences.



# WHAT IS GENDER DYSPHORIA LIKE?

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So, how does gender dysphoria affect people, and what might trigger it? Many things in modern society are heavily gendered: clothing, jobs, hobbies, colours, hygiene products, even mannerisms and the way that you act.

Agree with it or not, societal expectations push us to interact with the world through a gendered lens. If somebody frequently has to do so in a way that doesn't match with their inner gender identity, it can cause feelings of dysphoria - a sense of unease, estrangement, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and more. Most people feel these emotions and feelings at one point or another, but when they stem from your gender identity and how the world around you genders you, that's gender dysphoria.

**Not everybody experiences dysphoria alike!**

**Just because someone feels dysphoric about a certain aspect of themselves, it doesn't mean that another person will feel the same!**



# TRANSITIONING

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Transitioning is the process of making changes in your life to live as your true gender identity, with the gender expression that you feel represents you best. This process will look different for everybody; some people may make only small changes and take the process very slowly, whereas others will make big changes in their life and presentation, and want to do so all at once. It's important to go at your own pace and comfort level.

Transitioning might involve changing your pronouns, name, and how you dress; or medical treatments such as hormone replacement therapy or gender-affirming surgery.



# TRANSITIONING

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Not everybody has the same goals and opting for only some of these things doesn't make you any less trans. Many will find that transitioning and living as their experienced gender will greatly reduce their feelings of dysphoria. They could also find that they begin to experience gender euphoria, which is the feeling of joy, satisfaction, or happiness that you might experience when you are able to express your gender identity authentically and comfortably.

Dysphoria is not a requirement to be transgender. If you experience gender euphoria after changing your presentation, that's more than enough reason to do so!



# SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

**The best way to support transgender people is just to be respectful, understanding, and empathetic.**

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**Make an effort** to use correct pronouns, or their new name if they have one. If you make a mistake, correct yourself and move on. Don't make a big deal out of it as this will likely make the other person feel worse.

**Remember** that just because somebody has come out to you, that doesn't mean that they are out to everyone. If you're unsure about using their new name and pronouns around others, just ask them what's okay and what isn't.



# DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS

## Is it just a phase?

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Whilst the first time you hear of somebody's struggle with Gender Dysphoria will likely be the moment they come out to you, for that person, this is anything but new. Coming out as transgender or non-binary will be far from the first time a person has considered these feelings. Nobody realises they're transgender and then comes out the next day! Coming out can be a huge, and sometimes terrifying moment; so trust that they've thought very hard about it long before that moment comes.

### **"But there were no signs..."**

It's important to remember that there is no one way to be trans, to transition or to express one's gender. Perhaps before deciding that there were no signs, it might be worth considering what you'd expect the signs to be or even why you might think there'd be any signs at all. Gender identity and the decision to undertake transitioning is deeply personal; if you saw no signs, it's likely that they just didn't want you to.

# Regret Rates

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Gender Dysphoria isn't a lifestyle choice but rather a medically recognised experience for which the internationally recommended treatment is gender affirming care.

Regret rates for transitioning are staggeringly low. An EPATH research project examining the records of 3,398 patients who attended a UK gender identity clinic between August 2016 and August 2017 found that only 16 (0.5%) patients expressed regret at transitioning. Of these, 10 had detransitioned temporarily, only to re-transition later. Those that do detransition often do so due to family pressure, harassment and discrimination, or employment difficulties.

For gender affirming surgery, the regret rate lies at less than 1%. For context, the regret rate for knee replacement surgery is between 6% - 30%!



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**[theouthouse.org.uk](https://theouthouse.org.uk)**

**SCAN THE QR FOR MORE RESOURCES - INCLUDING  
A SIGNPOSTING LIST FOR FURTHER SUPPORT**

## **About The OutHouse:**

The OutHouse is an LGBTQ+ focused charity, offering support, services and social groups to the LGBTQ+ community of Colchester and beyond. Our services are open to anyone within Essex who can get to our base in Colchester. For more information on specific social and support groups please visit our website or social media.

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