



GENDER DYSPHORIA (GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER)

What it is:

Gender dysphoria refers to the emotional and mental distress that comes from feeling that your physical body does not reflect your true gender. "Dysphoria" means feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depression. In gender dysphoria, the discomfort an individual feels with their male or female body can be so intense that it can interfere with the way they function in everyday life, for instance at school or work or during social activities. Gender dysphoria used to be referred to as "gender identity disorder." But the clinical name has been changed in the DSM-5, as it has been recognised that the dysphoria, or feelings of stress, anxiety and depression, are the clinical problem, and not the mismatch between an individual's physical body and their internal sense of gender.

Gender dysmorphia manifests differently in various age groups, and so there are different symptoms for children than there are for adolescents and adults. Younger children may be less likely to express extreme and persistent anatomical dysphoria, especially in environments where the child's desire to live in the role of another gender is supported. In adolescents and adults, strong emotional distress may manifest as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and impact on the individuals academic or profession life. However, in a supportive environment where the individual has the option of treatments such as gender reassignment, the distress may be reduced.

Common symptoms in children:

1. The child expresses a strong desire to be of a different gender, or insists that they are of another gender
2. A strong preference for clothing stereotypically meant for the opposite gender
3. A strong preference for cross-gender roles in make-believe play
4. A strong preference for toys, games or activities that are stereotypically associated with the opposite gender
5. A strong preference for friends or playmates of the opposite gender
6. In boys, a rejection of stereotypically masculine toys, games and activities, and an avoidance of rough physical games or sport
7. In girls, a rejection of stereotypically feminine toys, games and activities

8. The child expresses a strong dislike for their sexual anatomy and the physical characteristics of their assigned gender



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Common symptoms in adolescents and adults:

1. The individual feels that their assigned physical gender does not match their internal sense of gender, for example an individual who was born male may identify as female
2. The individual has a strong desire to be of a different gender
3. The individual has a strong desire to be rid of (or in the case of young adolescents, prevent the development of) the physical sex characteristics of their assigned gender. For example a woman may choose to bind her breasts because she identifies as male
4. The individual has a strong desire for the physical sex characteristics of a different gender
5. The individual has a strong desire to be treated as a different gender by others
6. The individual strongly believes that they experience the typical emotions, feelings or reactions of the other gender
7. The dysmorphia associated with the condition causes significant impairment for the individual in one or more important areas of functioning in their life

Causes:

The dysphoria, or feelings of depression, anxiety and dissatisfaction associated with gender dysmorphia, may be more severe in environments where the pressure to dress, behave and conform to assigned gender roles is stronger. Gender dysphoria is associated with high levels of discrimination, stigmatisation and victimisation. This can lead to negative self-image, and high levels of co-occurrence of other mental disorders such as depressive and anxiety disorders.

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*