



Commonly Asked Questions and How to Answer Them

Direct excerpt, used with permission, from p. 50 of 'The Transgender Child' by Brill & Pepper (2008), San Francisco, CA, USA: Cleis Press.

We end this chapter with some commonly asked questions you will likely encounter when first disclosing to others that your child is transgender. It may be especially helpful to memorise a few so you feel prepared and do not become defensive or embarrassed. Although much of this is discussed elsewhere in the book, we know that having these answers handy in one place will be helpful to many families.

Why is your child transgender?

No one really knows. But research is beginning to show that some people are just born that way.

Did you do something to cause this?

No one can make a child transgender, or change a child's gender identity. It's just part of who they are, like being left-handed.

Is there a cure?

Being transgender is not an illness. It is a gender identity. We have a gender identity; in most people it matches their birth sex, but in some it does not. We want our child to be happy and healthy, and we know that this means allowing them to express their own gender identity.

Can't you make your child be normal?

Trying to make a child forget or suppress their true gender identity is nearly impossible, and studies show it is also hurtful. And I would appreciate it if you could see our child as normal.

Can't therapy or a doctor help?

We have seen a doctor who specialises in transgender children, and we have been told our child is happy and healthy the way they are.

Will he/she grow out of it?

Some children who are gender-variant decide to resume living as their birth sex, but most don't. We will support our child in either case.

Won't other kids tease him/her?

Probably this will happen, since all children are teased at some point about something. But our role as parents is to love and accept our child, and we will help them learn how to deal with the teasing. We will do as much as we can to educate those around our child – in our family, our community, and our child's schools. Education increases understanding.

Will your child be able to go to a normal school?

Since there is nothing wrong with our child, they can go to any school. We hope that our school will accommodate and accept our child as it has learned to do with other children who are different. All schools are actually required to keep all their students safe. There is training to help schools become more sensitive to gender-variant and transgender students.

Will they have surgery? How is it done?

This is something we will have to discuss as a family when and if it becomes an issue. If you want to learn more about these issues, I can refer you to some website.