

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSGENDER & GENDER- NONCONFORMING YOUTH AND A COLLABORATIVE MODEL OF CARE

Jon E, Nadherny/Calciano Memorial Youth Symposium
Clinical Essentials for Increased Understanding of the Diverse
Transgender Community

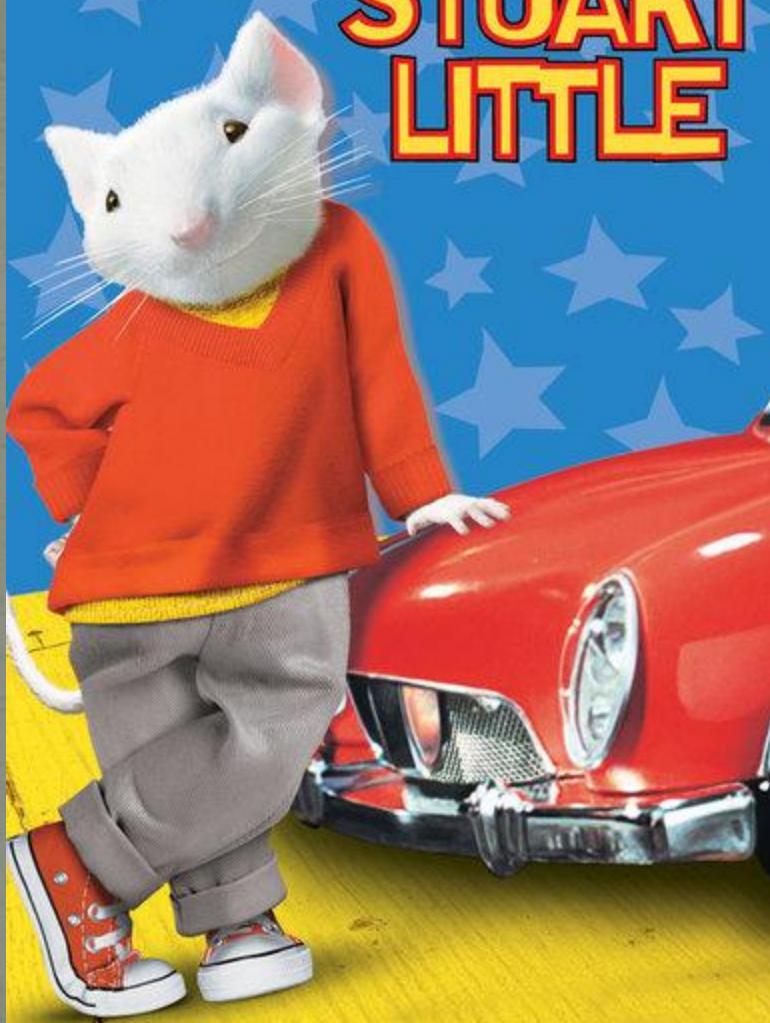
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STUART LITTLE



EARTH MOVING UNDER OUR FEET

GENDER =BEDROCK → GENDER =MOVING BOULDERS





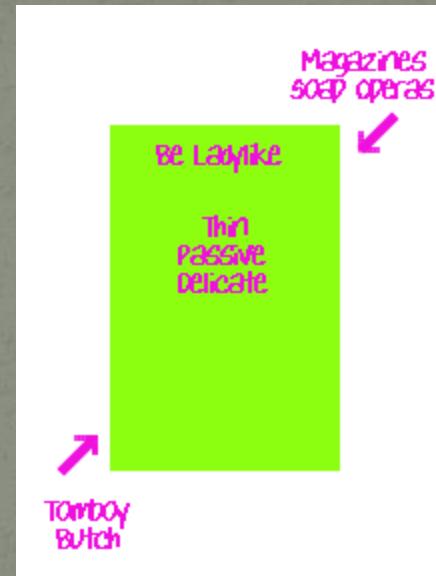
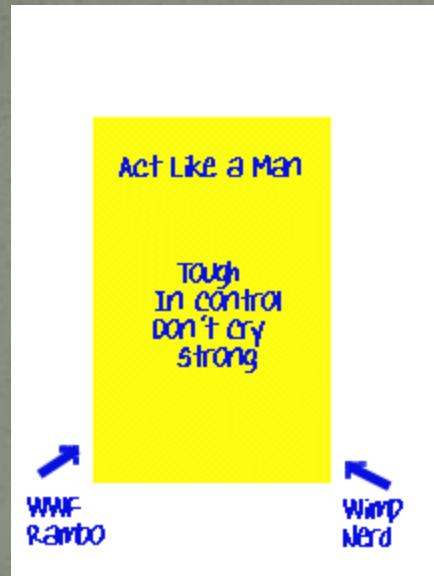




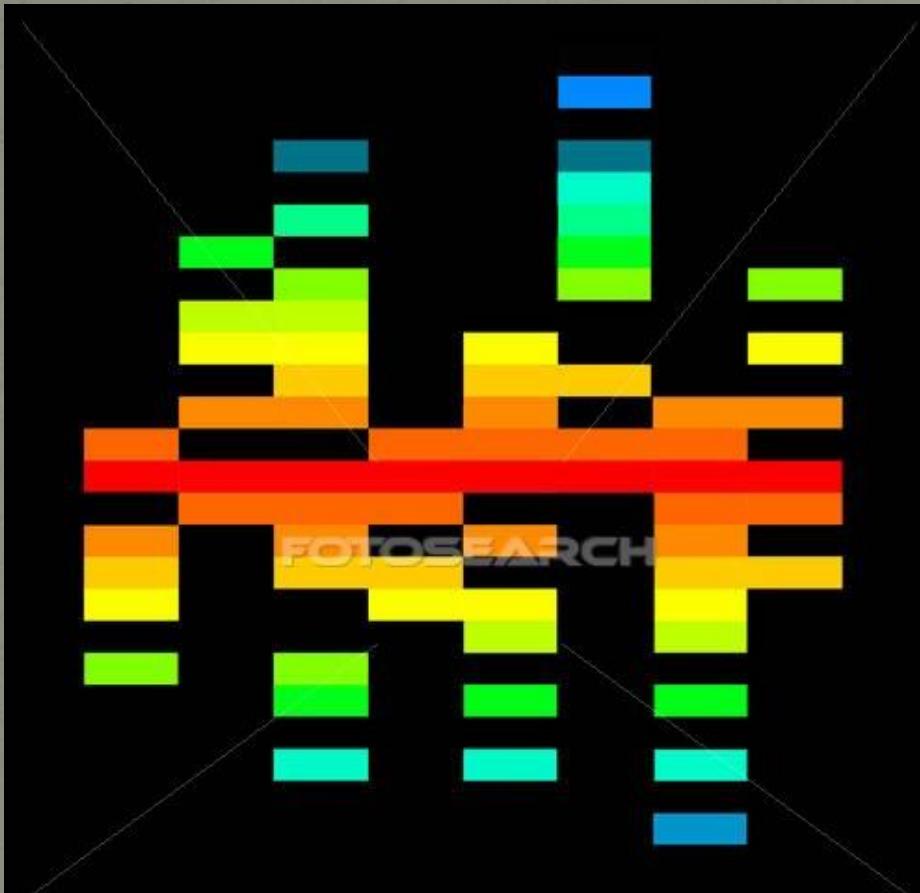


FIRST STEP
RE-LEARNING
EVERYTHING WE
LEARNED IN
SCHOOL ABOUT
GENDER

GENDER BOXES



GENDER SPECTRUM



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GENDER WEB



GENDER WEB

Each person's gender web
weaves together

- Nature
- Nurture
- Culture

THE THREADS IN THE GENDER WEB: NATURE, NURTURE, AND CULTURE

- Chromosomes
- Hormones
- Hormone receptors
- Gonads/Primary sex characteristics
- Secondary sex characteristics
- Brain
- Mind
- Socialization: Family, School, Community
- Culture: Values, Ethics, Laws, Theories and Practices

THE FOURTH DIMENSION OF THE GENDER WEB: TIME



Each individual alters their gender web as they weave together nature, nurture, and culture **OVER TIME**

THE GENDER WEB AND FINGERPRINTS

- Like fingerprints, no two people's gender webs are exactly the same
- Unlike fingerprints, gender webs are not fixed at birth. They can change over the course of a person's life

PARENTS AND THE GENDER WEB

- The gender web is each youth's personal creation
- If parents grab the threads from the child, they mess up the child's gender web and leave the child feeling all tangled up
- If parents facilitate the child weaving their own personal gender web, the child feels supported and expansive

CHILDREN BEYOND THE GENDER BINARY

Gender Nonconforming Children

Transgender Children

Gender Fluid Children

Gender Hybrids

Gender Priuses: Half Girl-Half Boy

Gender Tauruses: One on Top, Other on Bottom

Gender by Season: School year girl, Summer boy

Gender by Location: Home boy, At Grandma's girl

Gender Ambidextrous Children

Gender Smoothies

Gender Queer Youth

Agender Youth

Protogay Children

Prototransgender Youth

Gender Tootsie Roll Pops

TRUE GENDER SELF, FALSE GENDER SELF, GENDER CREATIVITY

- **True Gender Self:** One's authentic internal gender identity and expressions
- **False Gender Self:** One's gender presentation developed to protect the true gender self or to comply with the social environment's expectations, rules or guidelines about gender
- **Gender Creativity:** The weaving together of a unique and authentic gender self based on core feelings and chosen gender expressions

GENDER CREATIVITY & THE GENDER WEB

Gender Creativity = Each child's personal artistry in composing a unique and authentic **Gender Web** based on core feelings of gender identity and chosen gender expressions

PARENTS AND GENDER CREATIVITY

Parents have little control over their children's gender identity, but extensive influence over their children's gender health and gender expressions



*"We don't believe in pressuring the children. When the time is right,
they'll choose the appropriate gender."*

Dad Protects Son from Bullies by Wearing a Skirt. Guess What? It Works.



A PARENT REACHES OUT

Hi Dr.,

I came across your information while I was researching for my son. He recently just turned 4 and wants to be a girl and is only drawn to girl toys/clothes for the past two years.

We have not spoken with a professional dr. But wanted to reach out early and find ways we as parents can support him.

Please let me know if you could help.

Thank you!

CLINICAL CONTROVERSY: TREATMENT MODELS FOR GENDER-NONCONFORMING CHILDREN

- LEARN TO LIVE IN YOUR OWN SKIN (MODEL USED BY DR. KEN ZUCKER AT CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH, TORONTO)
- WATCHFUL WAITING (DR. PEGGY COHEN-KETTENIS, THE DUTCH MODEL)
- LISTEN AND ACT (THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL)

GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

(Hidalgo, Ehrensaft, Tishelman, Clark, Garofalo, Rosenthal, Spack & Olson, 2013)

- Major premises informing practice:
 - Gender variations are not disorders
 - Gender presentations are diverse and varied across cultures, requiring cultural sensitivity
 - Gender likely involves an interweaving of
 - Biology
 - Development and socialization
 - Culture and context
 - Gender may be fluid, and is not binary
 - Pathology is often related to interpersonal and cultural reactions to a child, when it is present
 - Therefore, pathology more likely lies in the culture rather than in the child
 - Gender may be the cure, rather than the disease

GENDER HEALTH

- A youth's opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real and/or comfortable
- A youth's ability to express gender with freedom from restriction, aspersions or rejection

GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL TREATMENT GOALS

- Facilitating authentic gender self
- Alleviating gender stress or distress
- Building Gender Resilience
- Securing Social Supports

ESSENTIAL THERAPEUTIC TENET

It is not for us to
say, but for the
children to tell

GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL QUESTIONS WE MIGHT ASK THE MOTHER OF THE **FOUR-YEAR-OLD**

- How long has your child been expressing cross-gender identifications or behaviors?
- Has it been consistent over a period of time?
- If able to express a sense of their own gender, how does your child articulate it and with what feeling?
- Does your child say, “I want to be a girl (boy) (other), or do they say “I am a girl (boy) other”?
- How insistent is your child in declarations and demonstrations of gender? How persistent?
- Does your child show distress or stress about the body they have?
- Is your child making serious statements rather than playful gestures when gravitating toward the toys/activities/dress codes/ etc. typically designated for the other gender within your culture?
- Does your child express distress when someone “misgenders” them?
- Does your child show delight when someone perceives them as the opposite gender?
- How do you as parents or other people in your child’s life respond to your child’s gender messages?

CHALLENGE: FINDING THE CHILDREN IN TRANSLATION

- If you listen, they will tell you who they are.
- But how do we know what they are saying?

TRANSLATION TOOLS

- Listening
- Mirroring*
- Play
- Suspension in state of not knowing
- Monitoring countertransference experiences that may distort your gender vision
- Cultural sensitivity
- Collaborative work with parents, family, other professionals, community

MYTH ABOUT THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

We rubber stamp whatever a child tells us about their gender.

SECOND MYTH ABOUT THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

- We push children to become transgender for our own political reasons, with no science to support us
- “The silencing of those who oppose [letting children make their own choices about gender] sends the message to parents that early transitioning is the only valid and ethical approach to a gender-dysphoric child. This message—pushing children to transition at increasingly early ages so that they will fit neatly into one of two gender categories—is false and unscientific.”

— Deborah Soh, The Transgender Battle Line: Childhood, Wall Street Journal, January 5, 2016, p. A11

REALITY: WE ARE NOT GENDER PUSHERS

- WE LISTEN WITH AN EAR TO FINDING OUT WHAT A YOUTH'S GENDER IS AND THEN PROVIDE THEM ALL THE NUTRIENTS THEY NEED TO LIVE AUTHENTICALLY IN THAT GENDER
- WE GIVE IT AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO FIND OUT, WITH COLLABORATION AMONG THE CHILD, THE FAMILY, AND THE PROFESSIONALS

REALITY: WE BELIEVE IN SCIENCE

“So what does the emerging science say? It offers several important findings: that the gender identity of transgender children is as deeply felt as that of cisgender (non-transgender) children, that transgender youth are much less likely to attempt suicide with the strong support of their parents, and that the well-being of youth who physically transition in puberty is on par with their cisgender counterparts of the same age ten years later.

“It is out of direct recognition of these scientific findings that dozens of new clinics affirming transgender children and their families have been established”

Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D. & Kimberley Manning, Ph.D.
February, 2016

CLINICAL CONTROVERSY

**CAN A YOUNG
CHILD KNOW
THEIR GENDER?**

RESEARCH ON PREPUBERTAL CHILDREN

- PERSISTERS: YOUNG CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE A GENDER DIAGNOSIS EARLY IN LIFE AND PERSIST WITH THAT DIAGNOSIS INTO ADOLESCENCE
- DESISTERS: YOUNG CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE A GENDER DIAGNOSIS EARLY IN LIFE AND NO LONGER HAVE THAT DIAGNOSIS BY PUBERTY
- MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN CLINICAL STUDIES HAVE PROVEN TO BE DESISTERS (most recent finding: 63%[Steensma et al., 2013])

SO HERE'S THE QUESTION

HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY SORT OUT THE
PERSISTERS AND DESISTERS EARLY IN LIFE?

AND

IF WE CAN'T, HOW COULD WE ALLOW YOUNG
CHILDREN TO TRANSITION FROM ONE GENDER
TO ANOTHER (an option for prepubertal
children)?

A REASON TO CARE
CHILDREN HAVE BETTER
MENTAL HEALTH OUT-
COMES IF WE RECOGNIZE
THEM FOR THE GENDER
THEY ARE RATHER THAN
THE GENDER WE THINK
THEY SHOULD BE

APPLES, ORANGES, FRUIT SALAD

- SOME YOUTH WILL BE EXPLORING OR AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER IDENTITY (APPLES)
- SOME YOUTH WILL BE EXPLORING OR AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER EXPRESSIONS (ORANGES)
- SOME YOUTH WILL BE EXPLORING OR AFFIRMING BOTH (FRUIT SALADS)

FAULT LINE IN CLINICAL PERSISTER/DESISTER STUDIES

- THEY CONCENTRATE ON MEASURES OF GENDER DYSPHORIA (IN THE PAST, OF GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER)
- THEY FAIL TO HIGHLIGHT THE MORE CRITICAL VARIABLES:
 1. CHILD'S GENDER IDENTITY
 2. CHILD'S GENDER EXPRESSIONS



Separating Apples, Oranges, & Fruit Salads Requires Separating Gender Identity from Gender Expressions

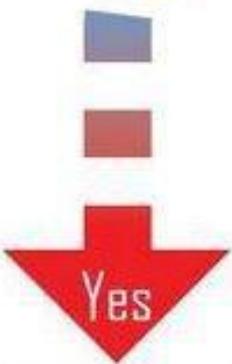
REVIEW:

- **GENDER IDENTITY:** Who I know myself to be at my core—male, female, or other
- **GENDER EXPRESSION:** How I put my gender presentation together—the toys I like to play with, the activities I like to do, the children I choose to play with, the clothes I like to wear, the way I like to move, and so forth

Gender Affirmative Model for Gender Expressions

How to tell if a toy is for boys or girls.

Do you operate the
toy with your
genitalia?



Yes

It is not for
children.



No

It is for either
boys or girls.



APPLES

- Children who often show up in child gender research as the “persisters”
- Cross- gender identifications early in life; continue on the same track into and beyond puberty (Consistent, Persistent, and Insistent)
- Typically say, “I **am** a -----” rather than “I **wish I was** a -----”
- Many express body dysphoria
- Gender explorations typically don’t present as child’s play but serious work
- Nature thread of their gender web often quite strong
- Our youngest cohort of transgender people



ORANGES



- Children who often show up in child gender research as the “desisters”
- Gender-nonconforming but do not repudiate their assigned natal sex. May say “I **wish I was** a ...”
- Large number of these children will become gay or queer, exploring gender on way to discovering sexual identities
- Do not tend to repudiate their bodies, but can engage in fantasy play or ruminations about life in another body
- Explorations in realm of gender expressions rather than core gender identities
- Nature, nurture, and culture all strong threads

“Gender Born, Gender Made brings to our homes, schools, and clinicians’ offices a wealth of ideas and tools that will prove invaluable as we move toward a more empathetic, just, and inclusive society.”—from the foreword

gender born, gender made

RAISING HEALTHY
GENDER-NONCONFORMING CHILDREN

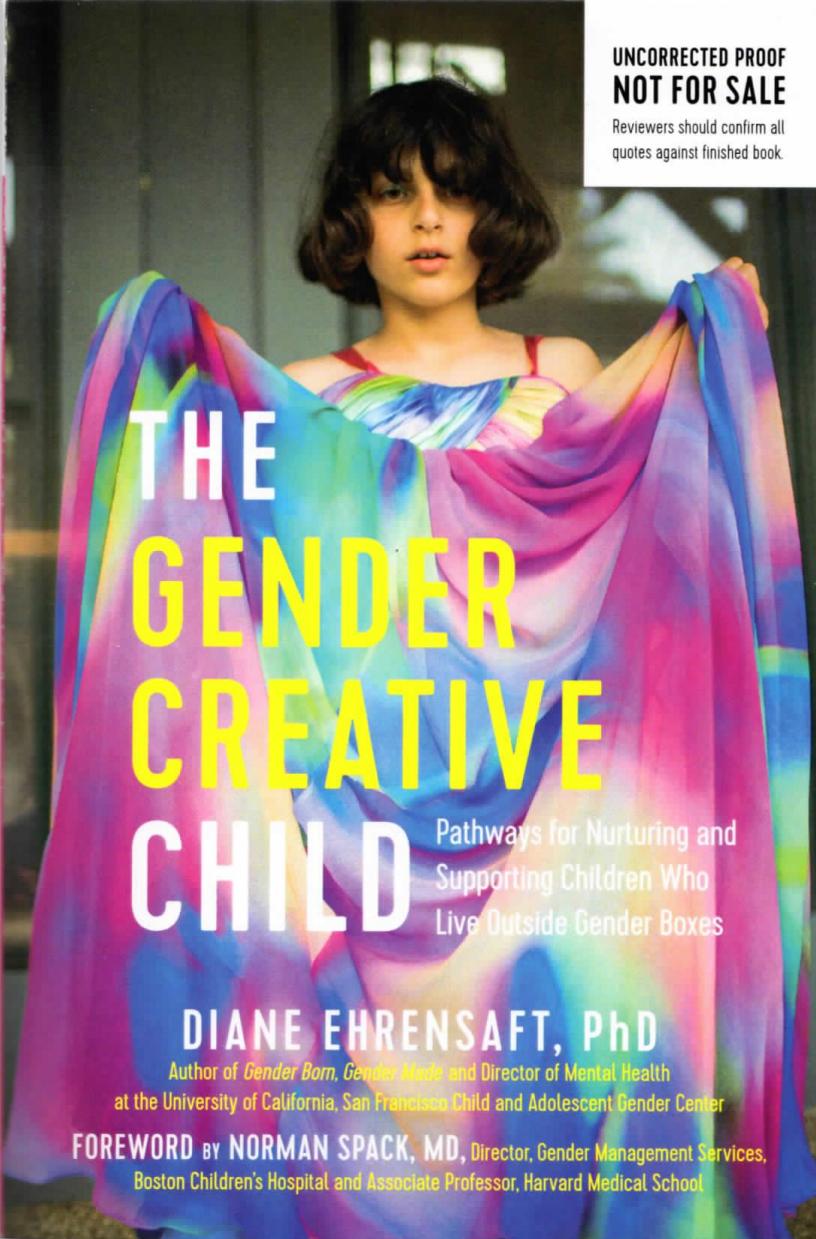
Diane Ehrensaft, PhD

Foreword by
EDGARDO MENVILLE,
MD, MSHS, Director of
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Advocacy and Education
Program, Children’s National
Medical Center



UNCORRECTED PROOF
NOT FOR SALE

Reviewers should confirm all
quotes against finished book.



THE GENDER CREATIVE CHILD

Pathways for Nurturing and
Supporting Children Who
Live Outside Gender Boxes

DIANE EHRENSAFT, PhD

Author of *Gender Born, Gender Made* and Director of Mental Health
at the University of California, San Francisco Child and Adolescent Gender Center

FOREWORD BY NORMAN SPACK, MD, Director, Gender Management Services,
Boston Children's Hospital and Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School

FRUIT SALAD



- Tapestry of self which is neither male nor female but own creative understanding of gender, both in identities and expressions
- These children resist gender boxes
- Often live in gender middle grounds, where no either/or but instead all and any
- = our agender, pangender, gender fluid, gender queer children and youth
- Recently, culture thread of gender web shown to be strong: children influenced by new notion of gender infinity



APPLES: When should we think about a social transition?

- When other possibilities ruled out, especially gender as a symptom of some other underlying problem
 - When central issue is determined to be gender identity, not gender expressions
 - When child or youth expresses need/desire to transition
 - When parents or caregiving environment can offer positive support for their child transitioning
- Then consider a social transition, either everywhere, or in safe situations

What About the Oranges?

- If issue is gender expression, not core gender identity, carve out space and support for youth to express gender in way that suits the youth, not way that suits society
- No social gender transition is called for

What About the Fruit Salads?

- They are a mélange
- Some may request or benefit from a gender transition, but not necessarily a binary one
- Others are fine with the sex assigned on their birth certificate, but redefine what that means
- We need to stretch our thinking to consider a pangender, agender, third, fourth, and so forth gender identity

WHAT IF THEY CHANGE THEIR MINDS?

- Then we help them spin together their gender web as they know it now
- There are no data to indicate that children who change their gender more than once over time, including switching back from transgender to their original gender, are at risk for any psychological disturbances—as long as we support them in their journey

Guidelines for Ensuring Healthy Apples, Oranges and Fruit Salad

- Listen to the child, help the child discover gender position that feels most authentic, fortify that child's gender resilience
- Remember that gender does not lie between our legs, but between our ears
- Always keep in mind that penis does not necessarily = male and vagina does not necessarily = female
- Make no attempts to ward off a transgender or gender-nonconforming outcome, including social transitions in pre-pubertal children

FIRST STEP IN AFFIRMING A CHILD'S GENDER

BEFORE LOOKING
INSIDE THE CHILD,
TAKE A LOOK INSIDE
YOURSELF

GENDER ANGELS



CALL ON YOUR GENDER ANGELS

- GENDER ANGELS ARE THE FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES INSIDE YOU, THE LESSONS YOU LEARNED, OR THE EFFORTS YOU'VE MADE TO RECOGNIZE GENDER IN ALL ITS VARIATIONS AS A HEALTHY PART OF HUMANITY
- GENDER ANGELS ALLOW YOU TO PROMOTE GENDER HEALTH AMONG YOUTH
- GENDER ANGELS FACILITATE GENDER ACCEPTANCE WITHIN THE ENTIRE MILIEU IN WHICH THE YOUTH LIVE

GENDER GHOSTS



TACKLE YOUR GENDER GHOSTS

- GENDER GHOSTS ARE THE THINGS YOU WERE TAUGHT THAT COME TOGETHER IN BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, FEELINGS, REACTIONS THAT TELL YOU:
 - GENDER-NONCONFORMING PEOPLE ARE SICK
 - WE HAVE TO POLICE GENDER IF IT DOESN'T COME IN TWO BOXES—MALE/FEMALE
 - TRANSGENDER BOYS AND MEN ARE NOT “REAL” MALES
 - TRANSGENDER GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE NOT “REAL” FEMALES
 - YOU CAN’T JUST LIVE IN THE MIDDLE OR SAY YOU’RE NEITHER MALE OR FEMALE—IT DOESN’T WORK THAT WAY
 - FILL IN THE BLANK: _____

WAR OF THE WORLDS: GENDER ANGELS GO AGAINST GENDER GHOSTS

- GENDER ANGELS AND GENDER GHOSTS RESIDE WITHIN US
- TYPICALLY, WE WILL EACH DISCOVER WE HAVE BOTH GENDER ANGELS AND GENDER GHOSTS
- TYPICALLY, GENDER ANGELS AND GENDER GHOSTS ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER
- OUR TASK: TO LET THE GENDER ANGELS DROWN OUT THE VOICES OF THE GENDER GHOSTS

LET GENDER ANGELS BE THE VICTORS

- HOW?
- BY SELF-EXAMINATION AND SELF-REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK FROM THOSE AROUND YOU
- WHY SHOULD WE ENGAGE IN THIS BATTLE?
- ANYTHING ELSE WILL CAUSE HARM TO GENDER-NONCONFORMING, TRANSGENDER YOUTH, NOT TO MENTION THE INSTITUTIONS THEY RESIDE IN, NOT TO MENTION THE ENTIRE SOCIETY

BEWARE GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

- WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?
- Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards a marginalized group
- Gender-nonconforming/ transgender youth and young adults count as such a group
- An accumulation of microaggressions can add up to trauma, even more so when someone is from more than one marginalized group



EXAMPLES OF GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Refusal to use correct gender pronouns , even when a youth tells you which one to use for them
- Constantly “slipping,” forgetting to use the correct gender pronoun, even when you’ve been asked repeatedly to use that pronoun
- Refusal to use a youth’s preferred name
- Asking someone what’s between their legs
- Running out of the bathroom if you see a transgender youth walking in
- Standing by passively when someone is making fun of a youth’s gender
- Making jokes about transgender people or not intervening when someone else does

ARRIVING AT BEING A GENDER ALLY

- While working to eliminate your gender ghosts, build a fire wall around them so they don't get out and hurt our gender creative youth
- Fashion yourself as a full-length mirror:
 - No one would want to look in the mirror and discover they were invisible
 - Best gift you can give a gender-nonconforming/transgender youth: actively reflect back to them an authentic and positive image of who they are—through your words, your actions, your feelings.
 - When it comes to gender, their gender is as real as yours and mine and as real as it gets

NO GENDER SPECIALIST IS AN ISLAND



- ERGO: THE NECESSITY OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL OF CARE
- EXAMPLE: THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT GENDER CENTER CLINIC AT UCSF BENIOFF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
- OUR TEAM:
 - PEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGIST
 - NURSE PRACTITIONER
 - SOCIAL WORKER
 - PSYCHOLOGIST
 - EDUCATOR/ADVOCATE
 - ATTORNEY



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Youth

Family

Friends

Religious Leaders

Educators

Mental Health
Professionals

Medical Professionals

Attorneys & judges

Lawmakers and
Legislators

LET THE YOUTH SPEAK

- Question asked to a UCSF Gender Clinic nine-year-old patient who had socially transitioned from male to female at age 8:
“What would you do if someone told you that now it was time to go back to living as a boy?”
- Emphatic Response:
“I’d take ‘em to court.” Pause. “Or they can take me to court.”

SO THINK ABOUT THAT AS A GENDER-NONCONFORMING YOUTH ENTERS YOUR LIFE