

Common Myths and Misconceptions

About Trans Youth

This resource was adapted from the larger [Affirming Adults Guide to Supporting Gender Diverse Children and Youth](#).

Misinformation and disinformation feed many myths and misconceptions that people have about trans and nonbinary youth.

Misinformation



inaccurate information that is **not intentionally** harmful; it may be outdated or simply incorrect

Disinformation



inaccurate information that is **intentionally** designed to deceive, mislead, and harm

Let's debunk a few of the biggest myths and misconceptions here.

Misconception

1

Being trans or gender diverse is the same thing as being gay or lesbian.



Fact

1

It is a common misconception that attraction ('sexual orientation') and gender identity are the same because they both fall under the 2SLGBTQI umbrella. Attraction and gender identity are separate and distinct components of human identity and are not necessarily related. Some people may identify as BOTH trans and gay. Other trans people may identify as trans and straight. You cannot and should not jump to conclusions about how someone understands and frames their own attraction identity based solely on how they express or identify their gender.

Misconception

2

Children who haven't reached puberty do not have a fully developed sense of their own gender identity.



Fact

2

[Research](#) shows that, on average, children's sense of their own gender develops between the ages of three and five, and that this can begin as early as two years old. If a child is articulating insistently and consistently "I am a boy" or "I am a girl" or "I am both" or "I am neither" they are old enough to know the intensity at which they feel this as their truth, regardless of if they are cisgender or trans. As such, being trans is part of one's innate sense of self. That said, no two experiences of gender identity development will unfold. For example, a person may choose not to disclose their authentic gender based on how safe and supportive their environment is to do so. Trans people all experience their body, their assigned sex, the related social expectations of their gender, and their gender identity differently. These differences will influence the ways in which each transgender person chooses to embrace their identities and move through transition.

Misconception

3

Being transgender is a choice.



Fact

3

Just as being cisgender is not a choice, being transgender is not a choice. In expressing their gender identity, youth are not trying to be trendy or rebellious. Though being trans is not a choice, a person may make choices about the ways and extent to which they will embrace their true and authentic gender. While it is true that trans identities and experiences have gained a considerable degree of visibility in mass media in recent years, gender diversity is not a trend. In fact, gender diversity is as ancient and universal as humanity itself. What is new and more accessible, however, is the language we now have available to talk about this aspect of human diversity, owing largely to strides made by trans human rights movements.

Misconception

4

Not conforming to dominant gender norms or expressing gender in a unique and diverse ways are signs that a child is trans or will identify as trans when they grow up.



Fact

4

The degree to which someone conforms to dominant social gender norms reflects a person's gender expression and not necessarily their gender identity. Gender expression is the way a person presents themselves to the world, whereas gender identity is a person's internal sense of the gender they know themselves to be. A child saying, "I prefer girl clothes" and a child saying, "I am a girl", are very different. Both transgender and cisgender children can explore clothing and expressions associated with masculinity and femininity. "I prefer boy clothes" may be a preference for any child regardless of their gender identity. However, transgender children are usually consistent and insistent with this need to be recognized for who they are. It is therefore very important to listen closely to what a child is communicating.

Misconception

5

All transgender people go through a transition process by changing their name, using hormones, and undergoing surgery.



Fact

5

There is one way to transition! Every trans person determines for themselves what they need to best affirm their gender identity. This journey may or may not include socially coming out as trans, legal changes to identification documents, or accessing gender affirming medical care like hormones or surgery ([see the different aspects of transition](#)). There are many reasons why a person may pursue a certain process and not others. Regardless, engaging in legal and medical transitioning does not make anyone any more or less trans.