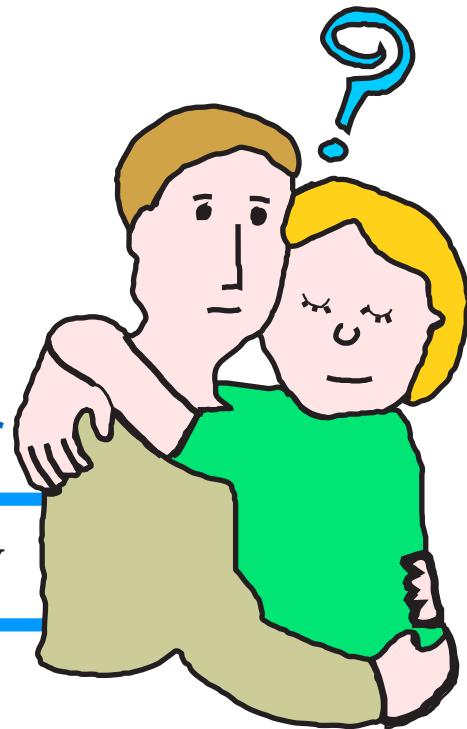


Understanding

GID

Gender Identity Disorder

A Guide for Friends and Family



What is this?

Gender Identity Disorder, or GID

You may not be familiar with the term “Gender Identity Disorder,” but chances are you have heard of some of the things it includes. In general, it refers to expression of ANY behaviors normally associated with the opposite sex. These would be things like:

Crossdressing (i.e., Transvesticism) - Primarily straight males who occasionally wear women's clothing as a method of sexual gratification or stress relief. The crossdresser has no desire to BE female, and does not believe he IS female. Many women also crossdress, though it is much more socially accepted.

Drag Queens/Kings - Primarily homosexuals who occasionally crossdress for fun or entertainment. Drag Queens/Kings do not want a “sex change” and don't believe they ARE the opposite sex. The terms are not actually in the definition of GID, but are in common use.

Transsexual - anyone whose self identity is that of the opposite of their birth sex. Transsexuals believe they either ARE the opposite sex, or that they should have been born the opposite sex. They do want to be socially accepted as the opposite sex, and most also wish to physically be the opposite of their birthsex.

Transgender - This is a non-clinical term, in common usage, which essentially means the same thing as GID.

Intersexed - This is a congenital condition. A person who is intersexed has genetic or physical attributes of both sexes. Sometimes the person's self identity does not correspond to the gender role in which they were raised. If this is the case, they also have GID.

GID is a broad clinical classification which may be applied to virtually ANY gender-variant behavior in men or women.

Are They Mentally Ill?

No. Your friend or family member with GID isn't insane! Because GID is a misunderstood, and socially unaccepted condition, it carries with it related psychological problems like guilt, shame, anxiety, paranoia, fear, and often a severe depression. These problems stem from SOCIAL non acceptance, or perceived non acceptance. These psychological problems do not originate from a source within the person, but originate from prejudice (or believed prejudice) from others.

There is no "cure" for GID. It does NOT respond to antidepressants or psychotropic drugs. The person usually benefits, though, from counselling.

The American Psychiatric Association, as well as the World Health Organization, agree that GID is NOT a mental illness. There are also internationally recognized “*Standards of Care*” followed by most doctors.

Why does it happen?

Is There a Physical Cause?

Nobody really knows why GID happens.

There is a growing body of evidence that there may be a physical cause during development in the womb, but the "jury is still out."

Rest assured, though, that YOU didn't do anything that caused your friend or family member to develop GID. There is no evidence raising or punishing a child in any way can CAUSE them to develop GID. Accept that it is intrinsic to who they are - like their skin color.

It is also not a "choice," any more than a person chooses any aspect of one's birth. If YOU couldn't be "talked into" GID, why could they?

It is generally believed among researchers that a physical cause WILL eventually be found.

How common is this?

The "official" numbers from the APA make it seem that GID is relatively rare with an incidence of 1 in 30,000 for transsexualism. These figures, though, are based on data from the 1950's and 1960's.

More recent studies performed outside the United States have found far greater prevalence as high as 1:2,900 for all diagnosed transsexuals who underwent genital surgeries.[1]

"Unofficial" estimates, based off of interviews with the surgeons in the USA and abroad who perform "sex change" surgeries, and of mental health care providers of the total number of diagnosed cases (including those who do not undergo the surgery) suggest that the REAL prevalence for transsexualism is greater than 1 in 500.

[1] WF Tsoi, Singapore 1988 / L. Goren (et al) Netherlands 1992

Aren't "Sex" & "Gender" the same?

Despite what you may have learned in school, SEX and GENDER are **not** the same thing. For most people they are "in sync" and there are no conflicts between a person's self-identity and their anatomy.

For others, though, they are at odds, and this often leads them to suffer from GID. Also, approximately *1 in 1000 births is of a child neither male nor female*, but only about 2% of those are EVER clinically diagnosed. A person need not be intersexed to have GID, and not all intersexed people suffer gender identity problems.

Sexual Orientation is another thing. The common terms "gay" or "straight" can become confusing when referring to a person with GID. A person with a GID problem may, or may not, feel they are "gay." **Do not automatically assume that they are homosexual.**

What Should I Do?

Stand by them!

The most important thing you can do is continue to accept the person as your friend or family member! It takes immense bravery to admit something like GID to others. Recognize them for trusting you with such personal information.

Stand up for them when and where you can. Use gender-appropriate pronouns. They will be facing many social situations where others will be openly hostile toward them. Don't BE one of those people.

Whatever their decisions, support them by offering your continued help and affection. Think of what you would do if they had told you they had cancer instead. GID is a problem no less deserving of your compassion.

Remember that this is a MEDICAL problem, not a MORAL one. Do not judge them!

Seek Professional Help

If your friend or family member is not already seeing a therapist, help them to do so. Find a recognized SPECIALIST in "Gender Therapy." Most general mental health care givers are not trained to deal with, nor treat, a problem like GID. If you are having a hard time accepting this yourself, you may also benefit from some kind of counselling.

Do not discourage your friend or family member from exploring their identity. Remember that the related psychological problems arose from a lifetime of being denied the opportunity to "be themselves." Different forms of GID respond to different coping techniques. Their therapist may recommend changing genders. This has proved to be the most effective treatment for many diagnosed transsexuals, and is based on research which began in 1913. You should accept that their therapist's recommendations are correct.

What Is At Stake?

Your friend or family member stands to lose their job, lose friends and family who are unwilling to accept them, and they may become targets for discrimination or hate crimes, including murder. They may become severely depressed by all of this and attempt to kill themselves. THAT is why it is important you stand by them!

50% WILL DIE!

Statistics indicate that up to half of all those diagnosed with GID will die, in part, because they have GID and either THEY cannot cope with it or others do them harm because of it. Most of those deaths will be suicides.

Don't let someone you care for become a statistic!
Support them in their time of need.

Sex is Complex!

