

For a child or teen struggling with their gender identity, influences are so important. Friends, family, teachers, and doctors can all either help them in a positive direction or push them toward harmful ideas. As a parent, one of your most important jobs is to evaluate and manage the influences in your child's life.

### **First remove the dangerous influences in their life:**

**Media:** Your child may need you to restrict or remove their social media, internet, or phone access. One large study of 14-year-olds found that as social media use increased, there was an increase in depression.<sup>8</sup> And multiple other studies found a link between social media use and body image issues, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, and other mental distress.<sup>5,12,14,19,20,21</sup> Teens who used no social media had the best mental health functioning, and every hour per day more caused worse functioning.<sup>10</sup>

**School:** Sometimes removing dangerous influences even means switching them to a new school or to some form of homeschool. If your child is in a school where friends or authority figures are telling them the opposite of what they are hearing at home, they need a different school. School is so many hours a week, and teens are more likely to follow advice from friends or teachers, even if it's bad advice.

### **As you start to remove harmful influences from your child, you should also begin to add in more good influences.**

Friends are so important for your child or teen. In-person friends who are not struggling with their gender identity or with self-harm can be a very good influence.

Another essential positive influence is a supportive care provider team. These care providers must affirm your child's design, not their gender confusion. This type of doctor or therapist will address psychological conditions or past traumas and giving your child time to accept the good design of their body. This honors both the body and the mind. It prevents the irreversible harms of hormones and surgeries and helps the child with their mental health conditions.

A big question for parents considering alternatives to so-called gender-affirming care is how to protect your child or teen from suicide. You've probably heard that people struggling with gender dysphoria are more likely to commit suicide, and unfortunately this is true.<sup>11</sup>

### **Keep two things in mind as you make treatment decisions:**

Studies show that affirming your child's alternate identity or helping them transition does not reduce the risk of suicide.<sup>13,15,17</sup> Even in the most affirming countries, people who transition still have an increased risk of suicide.<sup>2</sup> A better option, as we've been discussing, is to help your child address underlying psychological, physical, and social struggles without gender transition. A 2024 study of over 2000 youth and young adults with gender dysphoria found that therapy was equivalent to transition in terms of the suicide rate.<sup>13</sup>

Keep in mind is that the risk of suicide for youth with gender dysphoria is similar to the risk for youth with other serious mental health concerns like depression.<sup>3</sup> In fact, a case review of 91 youth suicides in England found that only 9% were associated with sexual orientation and gender identity, while 69% were associated with family functioning and 55% with mental health issues.<sup>16</sup>

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Some people point to a few research studies that found that gender-affirming care may reduce an individual's suicide risk.<sup>1,6,9</sup> However, the studies that show a decrease in suicide after so-called gender-affirming care have significant flaws, like small sample size, short study time, a huge percentage of participants who fail to follow up, not taking into account other mental health conditions, and not controlling for other interventions like counseling. These studies should not be considered reliable and should not impact a parent's decision about their child's care.

In this lesson we discussed how to manage the influences in your child's life so that they get the best care possible. Once you remove harmful influences and find your supportive team, you will be in a much stronger spot. The care providers can help you and your child develop an individualized plan to prevent harm while addressing underlying mental health conditions or past traumas. This gives your child time to grow out of their gender dysphoria and accept the good design of their body. It's not guaranteed, but many kids and teens do find peace in the body they were given.<sup>7</sup>

### Recommended Reading:

Keffler, Maria. *Desist, Detrans & Detox: Getting Your Child out of the Gender Cult*. Sophia Institute Press, 2024.

Grossman, Miriam, and Jordan B. Peterson. *Lost in Trans Nation: A Child Psychiatrist's Guide out of the Madness*. Skyhorse Publishing, 2023.

Shrier, Abigail. *Irreversible Damage: Teenage Girls and the Transgender Craze*. Swift Press, 2021.

### Support Groups:

<https://www.parentsofrogdkids.com/support-groups>

Another group of medical conditions that may be a factor in gender dysphoria is disorders or differences of sex development. They are very rare. One of them, called congenital adrenal hyperplasia, can cause females to have abnormally high levels of testosterone, similar to PCOS.<sup>3,4,18</sup> Finding out the specific condition that may be contributing to an adolescent's gender dysphoria may help them understand and accept their unique body.<sup>5</sup>

As you can see, there can be a lot of factors in gender dysphoria. Whatever you're thinking about these factors in your child's life, try not to blame yourself. And don't blame your child either. You're in the right place to find help.

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