

[Questioning Your Sex Is Normal, Not A Reason To Go Trans](#)

Anger and confusion about one's body and sex is a totally normal part of adolescence that most people used to outgrow.

By [Joy Pullmann and Bre Payton](#) The Federalist, JUNE 8, 2019

We [originally published](#) this article on October 6, 2015. In honor of Bre Payton's memory, we're republishing it today on her birthday.

When my (Joy's) little brother was three years old, he liked to don a floaty light-blue princess skirt, grey wig, cardigan, and sometimes even heels and a purse, and masquerade as "Mrs. Potter." An old family video shows him earnestly describing how he, Mrs. Potter, bakes cookies for "her" son, who was away in the military.

My parents didn't freak out or rush him to the doctor for hormone therapy. They smiled at how cute he was, privately urged the rest of us not to tease him, and went on with life. A year later, Mrs. Potter was over. Ten years later, that "gendertypical" boy's favorite activity was paintball in the woods. He never seemed or stated unease with his biological sex. Mrs. Potter was just child's play. Fantasy. Lighthearted fun.

Neither did I freak when my three-year-old son wanted his nails painted or said pink was his favorite color. Body decoration is a favorite child pastime, and pink is a beautiful color. He also grew out of those interests within a year.

What has been confusing, instead, has been to read about other clueless parents having their children injected with opposite-sex hormones and bodily cut and pasted at very young ages. It's insane that nobody calls this child abuse. It's not innocent but very dangerous and horrifyingly permanent alteration that a young child, who should be able to depend on his parents for protection and sanity, cannot possibly evaluate rationally or fully informed.

Somebody Please Help Instead of Exploit

Buzzfeed is among the many who gush rather than call Child Protective Services when learning about such incidents. It recently posted [the video](#) of a young boy in a ponytail getting his feminizing hormone treatments from the hands of his eerily excited mother.

Interestingly, the 14-year-old-boy didn't get think he should become a girl until he watched YouTube videos of another teen boy who had transitioned to female and is now known as [Jazz Jennings](#). His mother described coming across Jennings' videos and realizing that her son, Corey, should undergo hormone therapy:

When Corey was in the fifth grade she was bullied so badly her mother made the decision to pull her out of public school and begin homeschooling. It wasn't until Corey was 11 years old that the mother-daughter duo came across a video of transgender YouTuber [Jazz Jennings](#) and everything suddenly clicked. "She said, "Mom, I'm just like her, I AM a girl."

It makes one wonder if Corey would be attempting the impossible now had he not come across those videos. Perhaps it would have been a phase of confusion that would have sorted itself out had another transgendered teen's feelings not suggested the most drastic response possible. Even given that Corey's case seems like a more serious one than many, some people take hormone therapy to help their bodies coincide *better* with their biological sex, because bodies can be broken in many ways, including not producing the hormones fitting to one's sex, either at all or in the right amounts.

We as a society need to be careful what we're encouraging, especially when it could have disastrous consequences for vulnerable young people whose brains are not physically or experientially developed enough to make irreversible decisions such as "Should I cut off my penis and take cross-sex hormones?" People need to hear reasons why discomfort with one's body is not a signal to mutilate it. In fact, anger and confusion about one's body is a totally normal part of adolescence that most people outgrow.

I Wanted to Be the Opposite Sex, Too

Around my eighth birthday, I (Bre) remember asking my parents why I had been born a girl instead of a boy. Many of my friends at the time were boys and liked to play with sticks and climb trees, which I enjoyed much more than the games my girl friends would play. Boys seemed like they got to have all the fun, whereas girls only had childbirth and menstruation to look forward to.

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Upon reflection, I think that this kind of gender-introspection or questioning is pretty common. We all wonder how we got here, where we came from, and why we were born the way we are. And the grass is always greener, after all. It's easy to know intimately the frustrations of one's sex and romanticize the positive attributes of the opposite sex. The answers to those questions largely define us, so taking time to consider them is an essential step in becoming self-aware.

My parents encouraged me in my efforts to find the answers to my questions, but instead of filling my head with the notion that I could be whoever I wanted, they gave me realistic answers. I was a girl because I had been born that way, they said, and nothing I could do would ever change that. Their answers helped me to embrace who I am.

That period of questioning everything—including my gender—helped me to better understand myself and how I fit into the world. I am now happily settled into my skin and am grateful that my parents gave me realistic answers instead of fueling my childlike gender fantasies with hormones.

This Is Really Common, People

I (Joy) went through a phase of hating being born female, too. It seemed so unfair that boys got to have all the fun and enough inborn body strength to make a lot of money at a young age when about all I could do to earn money at 15 was watch a pack of snot-nosed kids for far worse pay. I couldn't dig fencepost holes or lug hay bales or work a construction crew (besides being a girl, I was scrawny). So I briefly became a feminist, which to me meant "getting respect for paid labor and not sneers for baby-making." For several years, I was miffed at God for having made me female.

When I'm successful at remembering that 'womanhood' does not equal 'loves princesses, gossips, cries, emotional-not-intellectual' I'm a lot happier about being a woman.

The intervening years however, were such that I'd basically forgotten about this extended period of my life until the topic came up and I remembered. Many friends I've since queried say they've gone through the same feelings. Here are some comments from a longtime friend from Michigan, whose petite and delicate appearance make her comments even more amusing and touching:

“[R]igid stereotyping can cause problems as well. When I’m successful at remembering that ‘womanhood’ does *not* equal ‘loves princesses, gossips, cries, emotional-not-intellectual’ I’m a lot happier about being a woman. The main reasons I wanted to be a boy (and, occasionally, want to be a man) have to do with my desires to be smart, strong (physically), independent, intellectual, authoritative, courageous, and athletic. And my desires not to be petty, gossipy, overly obsessed with my looks, flaky, emotional-not-rational, and crying all the time. I get really frustrated that no matter how much I work out, I will never be nearly as strong as [my husband], even if he just sits on his butt eating potato chips all month.”

“I think you’re right — wanting to be the opposite sex is probably a pretty normal thing that a lot of people go through at some point. And it’s not a reason to freak out.”

Our Bodies Are Mysterious Poetry

Corey seems to have been asking a lot of the same questions that we and many of our friends have. It’s a shame that instead of giving her child realistic answers, Corey’s mom is pumping him with chemicals that will make his problem worse. Eventually he will realize that, despite his mother’s best efforts, his DNA is still encoded with XY chromosomes. Try as he might, he will never get pregnant, nor will he bear a child, nor will he have a period or breasts. Instead of allowing him to grow into the man he was born to be, Corey’s mother and doctors have made it even harder for him to grow into his body, both physically and mentally.

A child’s feelings and perceptions change constantly, but puberty-blocking hormones have permanent implications for the body and psyche.

This isn’t to say that Corey or other people like him can always solve their own conflicted feelings themselves. Lots of people feel mildly depressed at different points in time, and these feelings are so extreme for some they need and should get professional care and extra support from their loved ones. But others can get over it with nothing more than time. Certainly there’s also a spectrum of sex confusion and discomfort, and it seems Corey is on the more severe end of it.

Rather than fill his head with untrue and unrealistic ambitions, his mother should kindly tell him what Bre’s did: that he will always be a boy because he was born

that way. A child's feelings and perceptions change constantly, but puberty-blocking hormones have permanent implications for the body and psyche. Cementing a child to feelings that don't accord with reality is cruel and damaging.

Guiding our children along the path that reflects rather than conflicts with reality is the best way we can prepare them for adulthood. Giving them realistic answers isn't cruel, it's kind, and saves them a lot of unnecessary hurt, pain, and effort. Parents should be parents. They should answer their children's questions with wisdom and temperance. Here's [a beautiful expression](#) of what's true about human biology that may offer some insight:

It all comes down to the fact that you can't paraphrase the poem. That is to say, if you have a poem which says something beautiful and true, you can't say sum it up by saying, 'ok, and what the poet meant to say is this syllogism.' And in the same way, the only way to describe what masculinity and femininity are is to say: 'here are men, they are manly. Here are women, they are womanly.' That's literally the only way to do it, because our bodies are poems.

Instead, common sense has gone out the window because a small subsection of vocal but reality-departed activists has destabilized common sense, a common understanding and common knowledge of truth. We literally have no common sense about sexuality because some people have decided to wage war on previously common, reality-tethered understandings of human biology. Their crusade will only create an [availability cascade](#) that hinders increasing numbers of children from getting over their confusion naturally, like we have.