

# Gender Identity



My research is gender identity and the impact this can have on the those that do not wish to identify with their sex assigned at birth.

The first few slides are based on my research. Followed by the work I have done with a student. Exploring their chosen gender identity, their feelings, challenges they face now and in the future. Helping to prepare the student for their transition to college and adulthood.



## Terms and explanations

### Cis or cisgender

When someone's gender matches the sex they were given at birth.

### Trans or Transgender

When someone's gender is different from the sex they were given at birth.

Non-binary, genderqueer or gender diverse.

These are gender identities that don't sit comfortably within 'man' or 'woman'. Instead, they sit outside of, across or in between 'male' and 'female'.

### Gender fluid

This is when someone's gender feels flexible and can change over time.

### Pronouns

These are the terms we use to refer to someone, like he/him, she/her or they/them.

### Gender expression

The way someone shows their gender through things like appearance and behaviour. This might not always fit with what society expects for that gender. Not everyone who expresses their gender differently identifies as Trans. It's important not to make assumptions based on someone's appearance alone.

- Gender dysphoria

- This is when you feel uneasy or distressed because your body doesn't match your gender identity, or when someone uses the wrong pronouns.

- Gender incongruence

- This is when the sex you were assigned at birth doesn't match your gender identity, and you want to make changes so that you can live as your true self.

- Gender euphoria

- This is when you experience feelings of happiness and joy when you're recognised as your correct gender. For example if someone uses the right pronouns or you're able to wear clothes you feel comfortable in.



## Gender Identity and Neurodiverse.

Neurodiverse trans people face discrimination and are more likely to have their gender identity questioned or dismissed by others, with some being told they are "confused" or that their gender identity is just a symptom of their neurodivergence.

Research shows that they do not get the same support and struggle to navigate the medical system compared to neurotypical. Therefore they will be more likely to suffer from anxiety, withdrawal, disruptive behaviour and depression. They are also more vulnerable to bullying and rejection from family and friends. As puberty starts and physical changes occur this can increase the young persons feelings of unhappiness about their body or gender.

Research indicates a significant overlap between neurodivergence (particularly autism and ADHD) or people with mental health concerns and transgender/gender-diverse identities, with transgender individuals being **3 to 6 times more likely to be autistic** than cisgender individuals.

Research shows that the rate is higher in girls than boys.

Some autistic people feel that their neurodivergence allows them to explore gender more freely, as they may not intuitively grasp or adhere to rigid social gender expectations.



Supporting a student with transgender involves creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment.

Practical steps to take are,

1. Use the name and pronoun they request.
2. Let them share their feelings without judgment.

Acknowledge their experience: phrases like *“Thank you for telling me”* or *“I respect your identity”* can mean a lot.

3. Ensure privacy.

Ask the student how much about their identity they would like other staff and students to know.

4. Check schools policies for supporting students with transgender. Advocate for inclusive practises.

5. Create an inclusive environment. Challenge discriminatory behaviour. Encourage respect and understanding among peers through education and awareness.

6. Offer resources. Suggest support groups, counselling or helplines for the student and family/carers if required.

# Personal stories

**Dr Wenn Lawson, autistic advocate,**

**researcher, and psychologist, said:** *"The non-autistic world is governed by social and traditional expectations, but we may not notice these or fail to see them as important. This frees us up to connect more readily with our true gender."*

(This matches my findings where people with autism don't always see social expectations.)

**Madge Woollard, autistic pianist,**

**said:** *"Although we are not transgender ourselves, my wife and I both identify as non-binary (though we are happy using the pronouns 'she/her').*

*We find we get on particularly well with transgender people, and those of different genders.*

*I think there is a huge overlap with autistic people and transgender people.*

*There are also a lot of non-binary autistic people around.*

*I think this is because a lot of us don't really fit in socially, and this extends to ideas around gender."*

**Sophie Gribben, a non-binary autistic person, chatted to us about celebrating Pride Month.**

**They told us:** *"One of the things I have difficulty with is attending Pride festivities.*

*I am sensitive to noise, and crowds, but if I am properly accommodated then I really enjoy myself!"*



Esme.

Due to heritage, religion and background I have to live a double life. For example, at college/uni I am known and referred to as male but return to cis gender when I am at home. Having to mask at home is difficult and makes me feel lonely. I follow my family's expectations. I live in fear of being found out because of my religion and being rejected or alienated, bringing shame on my family.

I'm not sure how the future will go, but living a double life has become second nature to me now. It's difficult, and I do hope that one day things will be different.

Samantha

When I was twelve, I first experienced gender dysphoria, which made me feel confused and anxious. I spent over four years with a name and pronouns that felt completely wrong, and wishing I could talk to someone about the difficulties of experiencing adolescence as someone I'm not. In June 2021, I came out to my mum. I was so overcome with fear about speaking about it, that I ended up writing it down for her to read. After that, I asked her to tell certain family members on my behalf. This wasn't easy, but it was such a relief being able to talk about it, and I feel less alone. I can't describe the happiness I felt as more and more people began using my name and my pronouns.

During this academic year I have had multiple sessions with Student X. The summary below outlines key points from these meetings.

I used the zones of regulation to help the student to identify different feelings/emotions during 121 sessions.

We looked at terms and explanations. We discussed feelings in different settings. Peoples attitudes and how our society is changing and adapting to support different identities. We talked about his transition to college and the difficulties he feels he may face and how he can manage these problems and where to get support from. We confirmed that college are aware of his chosen identity. We looked ahead at challenges he may face in the work place. We discussed unions and his rights. We looked at all the different support agencies/charities that provide support and the types of support they offer. We discussed independence and supported living for the future. We looked at relationships, how we should be treated and how we treat others. I had weekly contact with parents to ensure we were working together to maximise support. We looked through my research together and I gave a copy to the student and parents so that they could refer to it if needed in the future.



A selection of support groups available for our student to refer to for future use if required.

Foxwood Academy

Stonewall UK

Mermaids. Age 19 and under

The Proud Trust

Spectra

Neurodiverse and special needs specific support

LGBT foundation

Mind Out

Regard

ParaPride

Choice support

Immediate support helpline numbers

Switchboard LGBT+ helpline 10am-10pm 0300 330 0630

Mindline trans+ Mon-Fri 8am till midnight 0300 330 5468

Samaritans 24 hour 116 123

### Conclusion.

I gained a lot of valuable information from my research and from the sessions with student X. Student X has said that he enjoyed the sessions and we were able to share knowledge, feelings, findings, personal experiences and hopes for his future.

Working with both student and parents was equally beneficial to build positive relationships to maximise support for student X.