

# TIPS FOR MANAGING GENDER DYSPHORIA

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Gender dysphoria can be a challenging experience for those who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming and can be triggered by a range of factors, such as social situations, physical appearance, or internalized negative beliefs about one's gender identity. Gender dysphoria can impact every aspect of a person's life, and can cause feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and distress. Coping with gender dysphoria is a journey that requires patience, self-reflection, and self-care. In this article, we'll share tips for coping with gender dysphoria that can help you navigate these challenges and find ways to feel more comfortable and confident in your own skin.

**Remember that it is okay to feel the way you are feeling.**

Gender dysphoria is a valid experience for transgender individuals. It is not a mental illness, nor is it something that people choose to feel. It is a natural response to living in a society that enforces strict gender norms and expectations. Understanding that gender dysphoria is common can help you to feel less alone, and learning about it can encourage your friends and family to offer support on your journey toward self-discovery and self-love.

**Let people know how they can help you.**

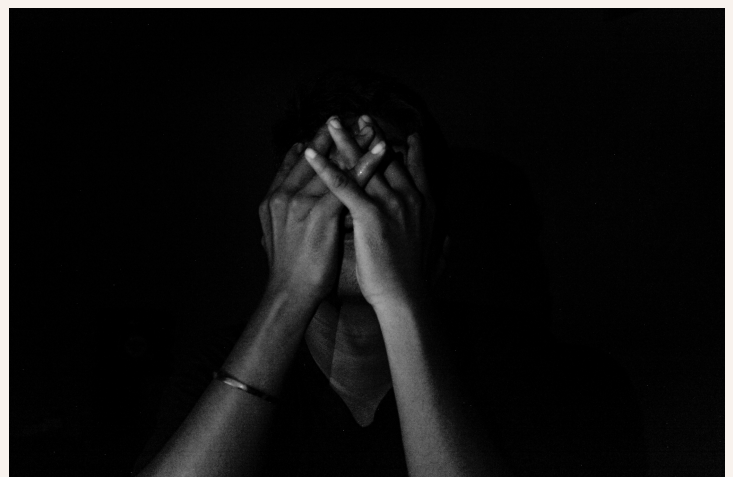
When going through a difficult time, it's common to worry about burdening others by asking for help. This can be infinitely more uncomfortable for individuals living with gender dysphoria, as the experience can be difficult to communicate for those living with it, and difficult to understand for those who are not. However, it is important to remember that everybody needs support from time to time, and it is okay to ask for help. In fact, letting loved ones know how they can help you is a crucial step in getting much-needed support. Whether it's a listening ear from a loved one, or practical assistance finding specialized care, being

open and honest will help you to build stronger relationships with loved ones and create a support system to lean on during more difficult times.

## **Set Boundaries**

It can be emotionally draining to engage with people who are not affirming of your gender identity. It can also trigger and/or worsen the experience of gender dysphoria. By setting boundaries with individuals who refuse to use your appropriate pronouns, name changes, or simply ignore your identity altogether, you can protect yourself against harmful interactions, assert self-respect, and advocate for your needs within the relationship.

While setting boundaries is an important part of a person's well-being, it can also be challenging and emotionally difficult to do so. For this reason, it might be helpful to seek out the support of allies and/or mental health professionals.



## Practice self-care

Committing to care for one's self is an important part of tending to the experience of gender dysphoria. Whether this means taking a bath, getting an affirming haircut, or indulging in a favorite hobby, investing in one's self can help reduce feelings of dysphoria and increase feelings of self-worth and empowerment. Engaging in self-care is an act of prioritizing needs and desires, which can be especially important for those who may not always feel seen or heard in a society that can be invalidating. Taking the time to cultivate a sense of self-love and acceptance can also build the resilience and confidence necessary to navigate the many challenges that transgender individuals face day to day. This does not replace the need to fight for a more just society but serves as a parallel process for managing current challenges.

### Take a break from social media.

Transgender individuals might experience higher levels of harassment, discrimination, and hate speech on social media platforms compared to other users. In addition to this, news stories and images of violence against the transgender community are often circulated, which can cause additional stress and anxiety. Taking space from social media can protect against negative or harmful content, reduce stress, and provide opportunities to focus on self-care.

### Spend time with friends and family who support you.

When living with gender dysphoria, having supportive friends and partners can make a big difference in a person's mental health and well-being. Emotional support from loved ones can help reduce symptoms of depression, emotional distress, and suicidal thoughts. Living in a supportive environment where you can be free to express your gender identity in a way that feels comfortable is critical, especially for transgender and gender-diverse youth. For those who do not live in affirming environments, it can be helpful to find safe community and/or therapeutic spaces to connect with others who have a shared lived experience of hardship and shared lived experiences of celebrating authenticity and joy.



### Remembering accomplishments.

The transitioning process can be a challenging journey, and if you are experiencing gender dysphoria, it can be difficult to remember the many obstacles you might have already overcome. Reflecting on the steps that have already been taken and/or the changes that can already be seen, provides an opportunity to focus on transition-related triumphs, and fosters a sense of hope for what is to come.

### Practice meditation or some type of relaxation technique.

Practicing mindfulness or other forms of meditation can help you to detach from your negative thoughts and observe them from a place of compassion and non-judgment. Noticing your thoughts, feelings, and experiences from a "bird's eye view", without getting caught up in them, can help reduce activation in the nervous system and develop a greater sense of calm in the midst of the challenging symptoms of gender dysphoria.

### Cultivate Gender Euphoria

There are many ways to cultivate a sense of gender euphoria, such as experimenting with gender expression (i.e. trying on new clothing styles, experimenting with makeup, getting an affirming haircut), or being around people who are understanding and accepting, or who share a similar

lived experience. Joining support groups, attending events or activities with others in the transgender community, or connecting with gender-diverse individuals online can help with feelings of anxiety and depression. These activities can also generate positive emotions related to gender identity, and promote a greater sense of self-love and self-acceptance.

### Seek professional support

There are a number of gender-specialized professionals that might be able to help individuals living with gender dysphoria. Mental health professionals can identify coping strategies and provide support and guidance for family members as well. Primary care physicians and/or endocrinologists can help with medical interventions that might mitigate the symptoms of gender dysphoria. Surgeons, psychiatrists, dermatologists, vocal trainers, etc. can also be helpful in tending to some of the triggers and/or exacerbating factors, as they offer a wide range of services that can help you to develop physical characteristics that align with your gender identity, manage mental health concerns, and navigate the process of transitioning.

Coping with gender dysphoria can be challenging, but it is important to remember that many people share this experience. By building a support network of friends, family, and medical professionals, practicing self-care, and exploring gender identity in a safe and supportive environment, you can develop the tools and resilience to cope with gender dysphoria and thrive peacefully and authentically.



### Brief Mindfulness Meditation Script For Gender Dysphoria

Find a comfortable and quiet place where you can sit or lie down without being disturbed. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to relax and let go of any tension in your body. Bring your attention to your breath. Notice the sensation of the air moving in and out of your body. Allow your breath to be slow and natural, without trying to control it in any way.

As you breathe, bring your awareness to the present moment. Notice any thoughts or feelings that arise, but do not judge them or try to change them. Simply observe them with curiosity and kindness.

If you begin to feel dysphoric thoughts or emotions, observe them without judgment and from a place of calm. Imagine that with each inhale, you are breathing in peace, and each exhale letting go of negative thoughts or feelings.

You might notice dysphoria returning. Do your best to observe each thought or feeling as it comes, without resistance, accepting that these feelings are a part of you, but do not define you. Allow them to enter and leave your experience with your breath. Breathing in calm. Breathing out negativity.

Stay here as long as you'd like, and when you are ready, gently open your eyes.

