

WORKSHEET

INSPIRED BY REAL STORIES

Activity 5

Story 1: I would love my body as it was

My parents accepted to have me operated when I was an infant. “How can you raise a child as a boy or girl if it doesn’t have the normal reproductive organs?” the doctor had told my parents. It is as if, to prove your gender identity, you have to either have a penis or a vagina. And why should a person identify themselves based on this dichotomous anatomy?

My parents felt a lot of pressure to “fix” this “deformity” as they had been told. It was as if I were a deformed creature of nature, and this diversity of mine, this “deformity”, caused an unbearable discomfort to those around me. I had to become like them. To be “corrected”, “to become normal”. My parents thought that the surgery would just fix everything and we would all put it behind us. But they have been carrying a lot of guilt, confusion and shame all these years. Especially because they realized that my diversity didn’t magically disappear by the operation.

Now I feel trapped in a body that I don’t know if it really belongs to me. The surgery I had as a child and the few surgeries after that did not make me more ‘beautiful’ or ‘normal’. Instead, I feel that my identity was stolen from me. I wish they had allowed me to decide for myself. Why did they think I couldn’t love my body the way it was?

Discuss the following questions in your small group

- What made a particular impression on you in the story you just read?
- Could you identify some myths/misconceptions/prejudices about Intersex people?
- Why do you think the parents in the story agreed to have their child operated?
- What do you think the person in this story is feeling? How was this experience for them?
- Do you feel this person’s rights were violated? In what way?
- What messages does this story convey about gender identity and sex characteristics?





Story 2: My experience as asexual:

Inspired from Amy Maria Flannigan's archives⁸¹

Asexuality is when a person does not feel sexual attraction. And there is nothing wrong with that, nothing that needs to be “corrected”. It is not a disorder of sexual desire as some people or even some medical professionals believe. Asexuality is an orientation, in the same way as heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, multi-sexuality etc. We (asexuals) do not need treatment, we can be absolutely happy as we are! The only thing that makes us unhappy is to feel pressured by society to become “normal” people. Well, I have news for you! We are by no means abnormal or strange. We are humans!

I certainly understand that sex can be a very important part of a person's life if they want to. There are people who don't have sex, who don't want to have sex or who don't care about sex, and that should be okay. Just as there is sex without love, there is also love without sex!

“Hmmm! Some say ... you can't be asexual if you have sex ...! “Asexuals can have sex. Some asexuals have sex to please their partner. Even though they don't feel sexual attraction, some asexuals may even like the feeling that sex gives them. Other asexual people don't have sex at all, because they just don't want it or because they feel a certain negativity about sex. And for those

people who don't have sex, don't like sex, or don't want to have sex, it is important to respect their sexual identity and their choices. This doesn't make them any less human.

Discuss the following questions in your small group

- What made a particular impression on you in the story you just read?
- Could you identify some myths/misconceptions/prejudices about people who identify as asexual?
- What impact do these myths, prejudices and misconceptions have on people who identify as asexual?
- What messages does this story convey about sexual orientation and sexual identities?



⁸¹ <https://oneloveallegequal.org/author/amyflannigan/>

Story 3: Why should I be any different?

They tell me I'm confused. That I can't decide whether I am attracted to men or women. My gay friends think I am gay and that I must finally accept my gay identity and 'get out of the closet'. My straight friends often ask me about my relationships with women and just "tolerate" my relationship with men. They think I'm just "experimenting". "I'm sure all this experimentation will soon pass" my sister told me a couple of months ago. "You will meet a nice girl and you'll eventually marry her and then you won't have the need to be with men. You know, getting into a relationship with a woman will make our mum very happy."

What never ceases to amaze me is when people ask me "to what percentage are you attracted to men and to what percentage are you attracted to women?". It is again an indirect way for them to figure out whether I'm gay or straight and whether I'm more of one than the other. Others ask me "Why don't you just choose? Men or women and just stick to your choice?"

But it is not a matter of choice !!! It is a matter of who I am. Why should I choose then?



Story 4: Thoughts and experiences of parent of a trans child (inspired from <https://growinguptransgender.com>)

I hear some girls say, "I was a tomboy when I was a kid." Or "my brother was wearing my dresses when he was young." This has nothing to do with being transgender. Being transgender is not about the games you play or how you dress or who your friends are. Being transgender has to do with the identity that a child feels deep inside them. They know they are a girl, boy or something else before they even learn about the world. They know it instinctively. They know it, despite what their parents and everyone around them tell them

Discuss the following questions in your small group

- What made a particular impression on you in the story you just read?
- What myths / misconceptions/prejudices surround bisexuality? How do these affect people who identify as bisexual?
- What do you think this person in the story is feeling? Does he feel free to express his sexuality openly? Why not?
- Based on this history, what is bisexuality? Is it a matter of choice you think?

about what their gender is or should be. How our child has developed a strong gender identity as a girl, I don't really know. Hundreds of children around the world have had the same experience. There have been transgender people all over the world, throughout the centuries.

I understand that gender identity is a very difficult concept to grasp and may not make sense to people who have never been criticized or had never had to think about their gender identity (because it never was an issue for them), but for transgender children their gender identity is of utmost importance. It can become the focus of their lives (until they are accepted, just like any



other child). It is therefore crucial that the gender they identify with is recognized and accepted wholly and completely, without judgement or attempts to change them.

Other parents judge us that we did not try hard enough to 'impose' on our child their 'proper gender identity'. Many parents of transgender children spend months and years telling their child, "you are not a boy, you are a girl", often until the child stops asserting the gender they feel inside (although they don't stop feeling awkward, wrong, or trapped). In our house this had been our daily talk for over 6 months. My child was so strongly committed to confirming her gender identity that this need dominated and harmed her life at that time. I have huge guilt that I didn't support my daughter back then. Children who continue to insist on vigorously asserting their gender identity do so against the tremendous social and family pressure that often tells them they are wrong.

Some people tell me they can't understand why someone would choose gender reassignment surgery and find the process appalling. Why can't people choose to do what they want with their own bodies, without others around them having an opinion about it? Many transgender individuals choose not to have surgery. Other transgender people change their bodies with cosmetic or medical interventions (e.g. with tattoos, plastic surgery, breast augmentation / breast reduction etc.). I want to do my best to try to support my daughter's comfort in her body without the need for surgery, but I am not naive and know that for

many people surgery is vital to redefining their gender. I'll support her in whatever she chooses to do.

For me, it is not my daughter who has changed. We, as parents, have changed and restored our understanding and acceptance of our child. It was only then that our daughter could grow happily and flourish.

Discuss the following questions in your small group

- What made a particular impression on you in the story you just read?
- What myths / misconceptions/prejudices surround transgender people? How do these affect people who are transgender?
- What do you think the girl in the story is feeling? How was her experience as a transgender child?
- What are the parents of this girl feeling? How did they manage this experience?
- What has helped in the end for this girl to be accepted as she is?
- What messages does this story convey about gender identity?

