

CONSIDERATIONS OF LATE IN LIFE TRANSITIONERS
GEISINGER COMMONWEALTH SCHOOL of MEDICINE
2024 TRANSGENDER HEALTH CONFERENCE

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OBJECTIVES:

Give insight into the issues and obstacles facing older transgender people.

Describe some of the outcomes of these issues.

Provide suggestions for how practitioners can help their trans clients.

1. Issues and Obstacles

a. Little or no support group

- Often no parents to validate and assist.
- Often live alone with no one to confide in or lean on during low points.
- No one to share the journey –

No conversation partner over meals at home and at restaurants.

Alone for at-home activities, such as watching TV and movies, cooking, reading, home projects, neighborhood walks, daily conversation.

No one to share the enjoyment of outside activities, such as church, concerts, shows, athletic events, travel, dancing.

- No “community”

Not in school, therefore no classmates, roommates, or daily contact with others

May no longer be working; therefore no co-workers, no “reason” to get dressed and get out of the house every day.

b. Fear and anxiety

- Feel conspicuous when going out alone.
- Fear for safety when out alone.
- No one to provide credibility (“street cred”).
- Fear of traffic stops.
- Fear of TSA humiliation.
- Fear of having no support during medical emergencies.

c. Discrimination, Resistance, and Rejection

- Resistance and/or rejection from children, spouses, siblings, friends, co-workers, church.
- Judgment and ridicule from strangers.
- Job loss, or failure to hire.
- Refusal of services by businesses.
- Refusal or dismissive care from health care providers.
- Anti-trans legislation and political attacks.

d. Stress of Double Life, especially during Real Life Test.

- Have to use old name and new name.
- Have to sign legal documents with old name.
- Drivers license name and photo do not match new name and appearance.
- Credit cards do not match new name and appearance.
- TSA screenings
- Have to change clothes depending on circumstances; sometimes several times a day.
- Mis-gendered every day due to --

“Work-in-Progress” appearance.

Voice, especially on phone.

2. Outcomes

- Extreme Loneliness and Depression
- Self-doubt – “Is it worth it?”
- Regret over life “wasted” before transitioning
- Unemployment / homelessness
- Poor general health
- Suicide ideation

3. How can I help?

- Validate!! Every chance, every day. Tolerance and acceptance are not sufficient.
- Encourage, celebrate, hug, say “I love you” – out loud!
- Invite – lunch, dinner, shows, movies, concerts, church, day trips.
- Include in typical preferred-gender activities –

For M to F: “female” events, such as a “girls night out,” flower shows, ballet, yoga, museum trips, clothes shopping, etc.

For F to M: hockey and football games, dirt biking, car shows, car races, etc.

- Strive for and celebrate moments of gender *euphoria* for your trans friends.
- Seek out moments and places of glimmer to share.

4. In Summary

- Older adults in general often experience isolation, loneliness, and depression.
- Transgender people of all ages experience the same things.
- Advanced age and being transgender compound these feelings.
- Isolation and mild depression can lead to severe depression and suicidal ideation.
- Transgender people are not asking for special treatment; we simply want to be included in our cisgender friends and family activities and treated as though we, too, are cisgender.
- We can't force people to welcome and include us; we can only hope that you will *choose* to treat us no differently than your cisgender friends.
- And, finally, we hope that you will advocate for us. We can't change peoples' minds by ourselves. We are only about one per cent of the population. We need help from kind, understanding, and loving cis-gender people. Will that be you?