



**UNDERSTANDING
GENDER DYSPHORIA IN YOUTH:
Navigating biological, psychological,
and social realities**

Shawn V Giammattei, PhD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **New name, same service:** CAPP is now **Cal-MAP!** (“The California Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal)
- For more personalized guidance on how to apply today’s teaching (and other webinars) to your own patients’ care, please call us! **Call (800) 253-2103** or **request a consult online** at cal-map.org
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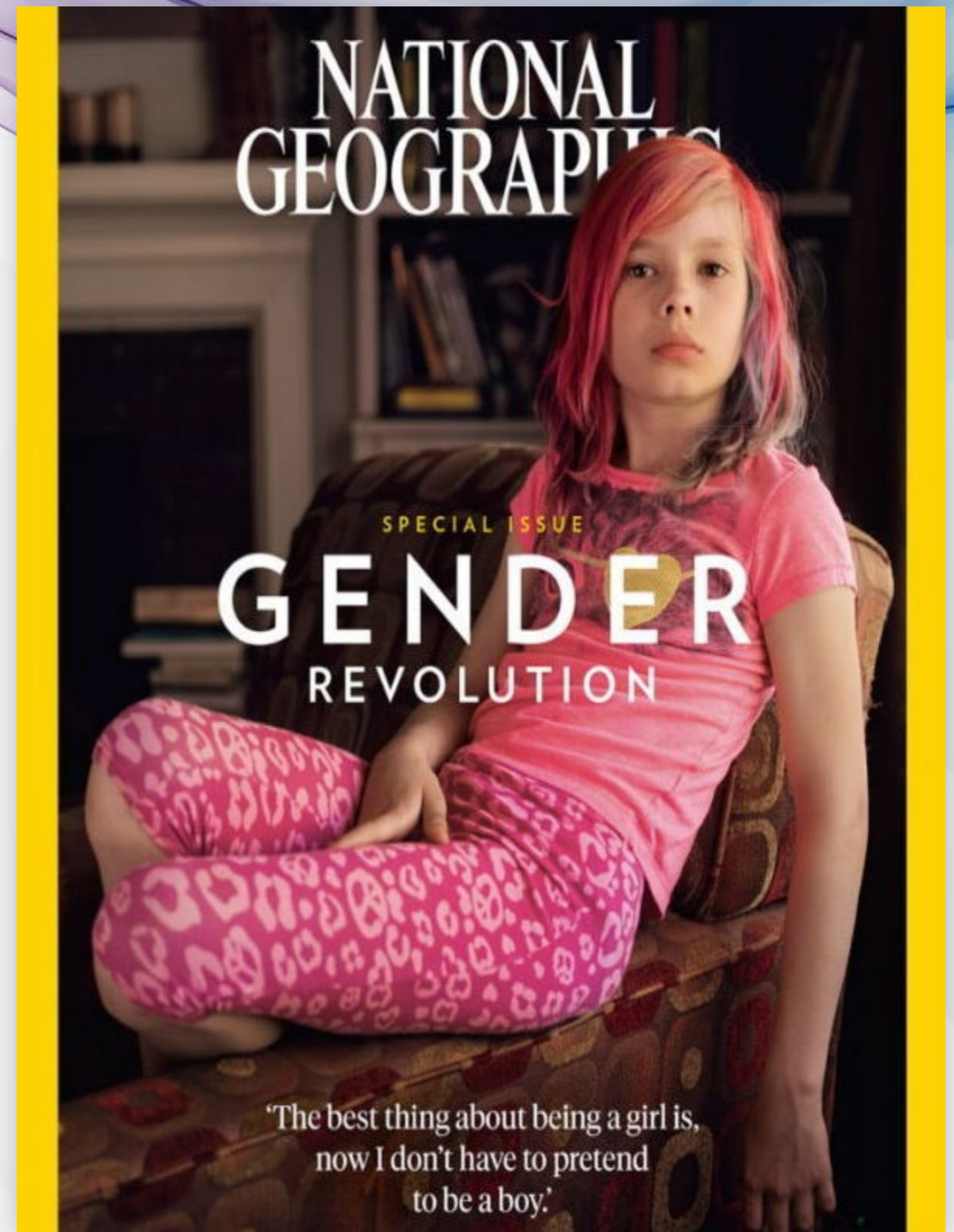
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- UCSF CAPP is supported by federal and state grant funding.
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 - CAPP is also sponsored by the California Department of Health Care Services Prop 56 Behavioral Health Integration Funding, in partnership with Anthem and Blue Cross.

We help gender diverse youth and their families survive and thrive, not by focusing on their difficulties, but by recognizing the brilliance, creativity, and resilience inherent in their bonds.

~ Shawn V. Giammattei, PhD

TENETS OF THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL



FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS



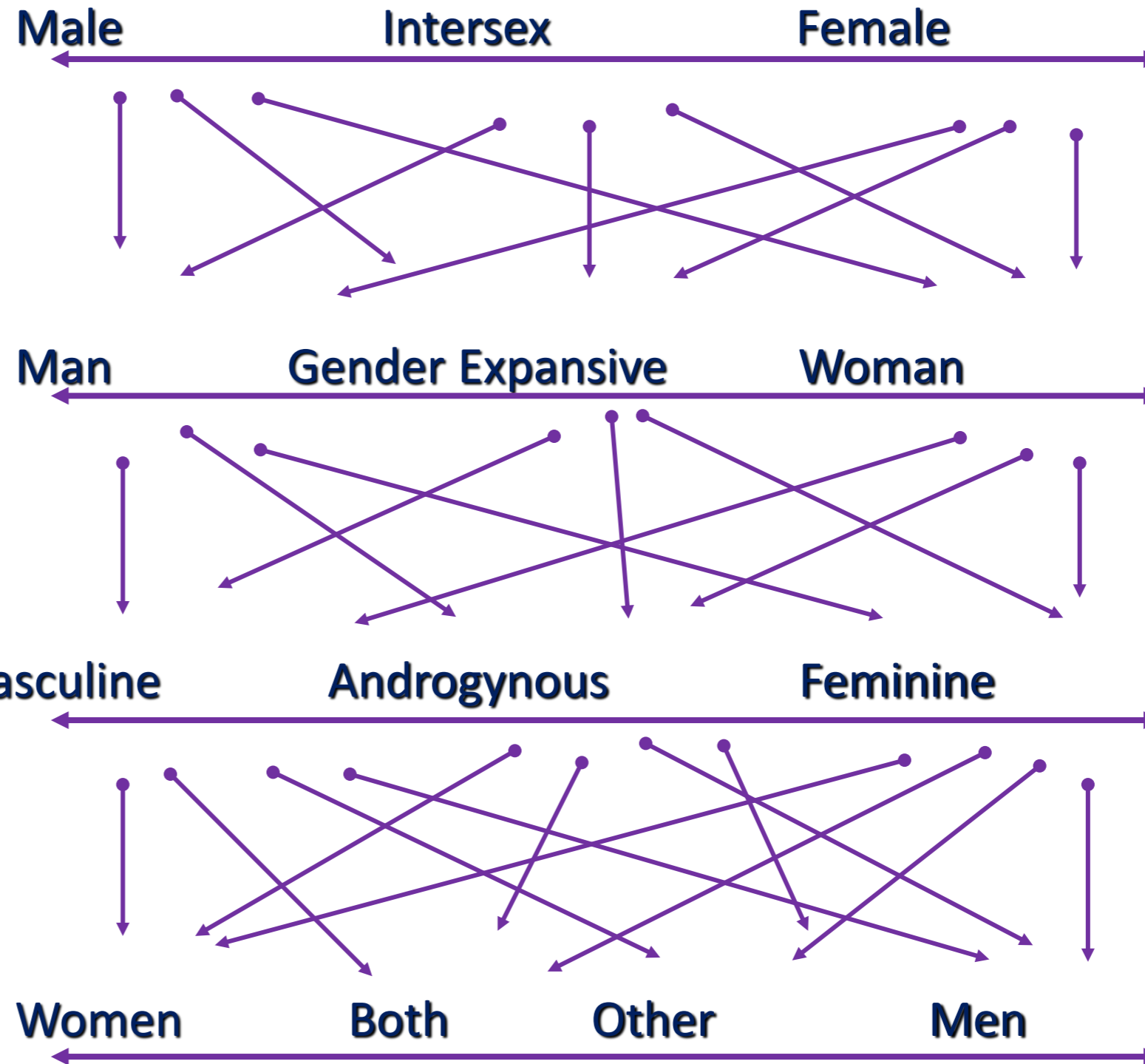
- **Gender & Sex** are not the same thing
- **Gender Identity & Gender Expression** are not the same thing
- **Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation** are different constructs that influence each other
- **We all have both!**

(Hidalgo et al, 2013)

AN UPDATED MODEL

Many Configurations are Possible

- **Biological Sex:**
*Hormones, genitalia
secondary sex
characteristics*
- **Gender Identity**
"I am a...":
- **Gender Expression**
*Dress, posture,
roles, identity*
- **Sexual Orientation**
Attracted to:



© Samuel Lurie, 2004

THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

- **Gender Variations** are not Disorders
- **Gender presentations are diverse and varied** across culture, requiring cultural sensitivity/humility

(Hidalgo et al, 2013)



THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

Gender likely involves an interweaving of:

- Biology
- Development and Socialization
- Culture and Context
- Develops over time



(Hidalgo et al, 2013)

THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL



- A person is the expert on their gender regardless of age.
- Gender may be fluid and is not binary

(Hidalgo et al, 2013)¹⁰

THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

- We do not inadvertently blame clients for the impact of discrimination and internalized transphobia
- *Pathology, when it is present, is often related to interpersonal and cultural reactions to a person, therefore, pathology more likely lies in the culture rather than the person*
- Expressing one's authentic gender may be the cure, rather than the disease

DEFINITION OF GENDER HEALTH

- Opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real and/or comfortable
- Ability to express gender with freedom from restriction, aspersion or rejection



(Hidalgo et al, 2013)

WORKING WITH GENDER DIVERSE YOUTH

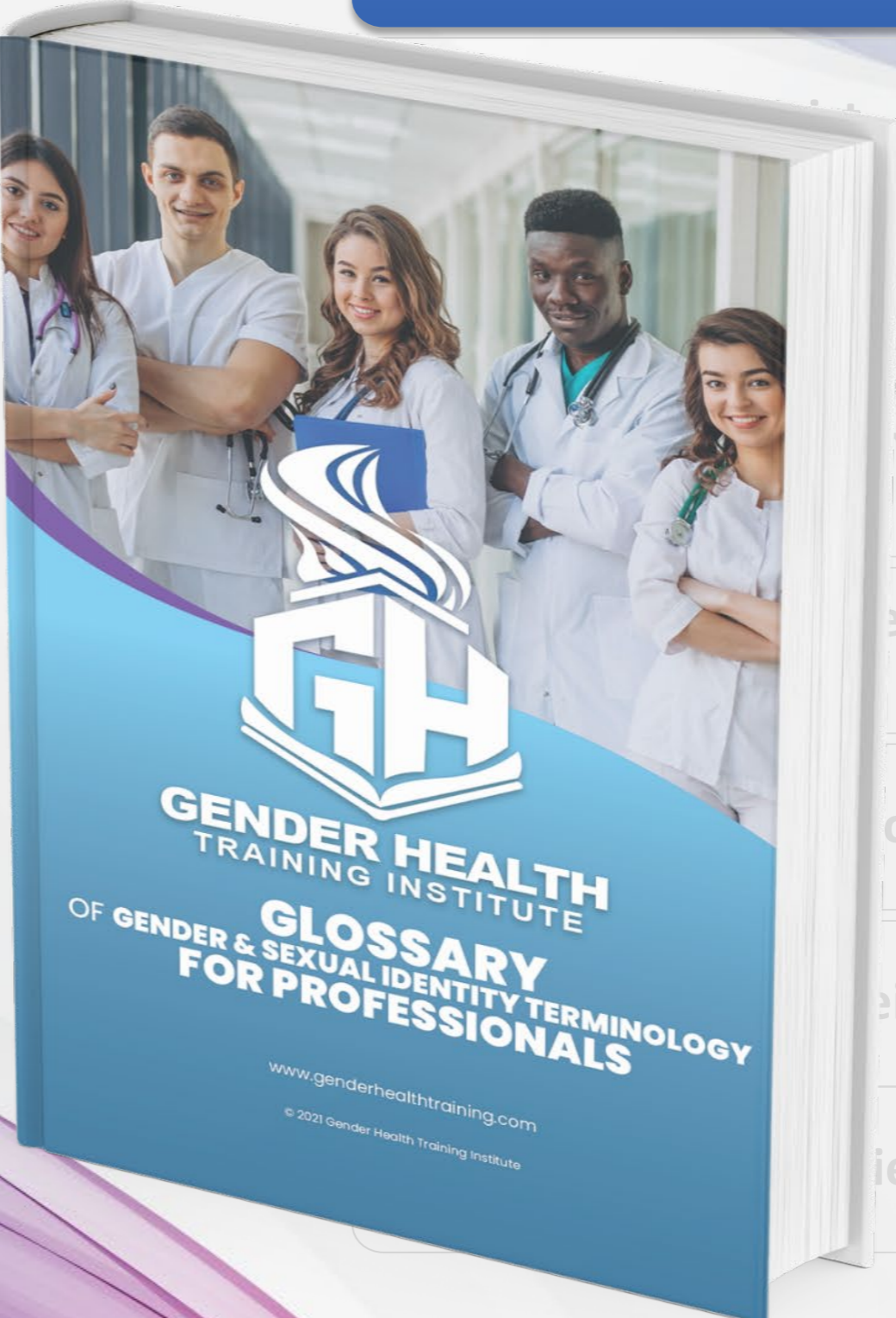


- Recognize and respect gender diversity & unique gender journeys
- Recognize the potential impact on mental health and well-being
- Show compassion for the experience of parents, while not ignoring the child
- Recognize your role in creating inclusive environments

GENDER AFFIRMATIVE AREAS OF FOCUS

Know the Terminology

<https://www.genderhealthtraining.com/free-download>



of your model

potential negative experiences for

presence of minority stress and

journeys and the science

being trans is the primary issue

science present

PUBERTY: THE TRANSGENDER & GENDER EXPANSIVE EXPERIENCE

- *More youth present for treatment at this time*
 - gender is not always a central identity for young gender diverse children.
 - Some youth report not thinking about gender much until adolescence.
 - Other gender-diverse children imagine they will become the gender they identify with when they grow up rather than their current birth-assigned sex.

(Nealy, 2017)



PUBERTY: THE TRANSGENDER & GENDER EXPANSIVE EXPERIENCE



- **Puberty for TGE youth can be excruciating**
 - For some the body changes are a betrayal
 - For others it is a catalyst for change
 - The changes occurring in their bodies are completely out of their control.
 - creates a sense of overwhelming anxiety and panic that can result in:
 - emotional and/or behavior difficulties
 - Self-harm
 - Eating disorders
 - Suicidality
 - Drug and alcohol use

UNDERSTANDING GENDER RELATED CHALLENGES



GENDER DYSPHORIA / GENDER INCONGRUENCE

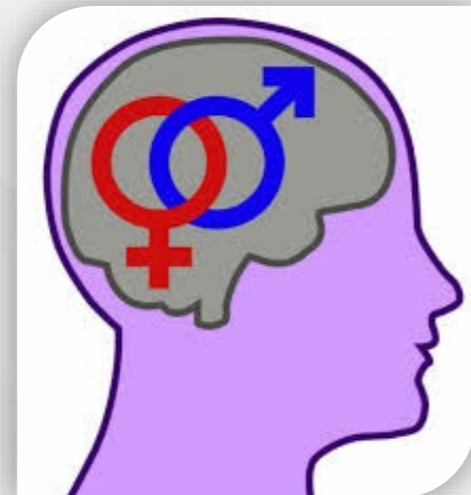
“

Discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics)

”

GENDER DYSPHORIA – THE EXPERIENCE

Mental Map



Social Mirror

- Pronouns
- Name
- Expectations



- Physical Mirror
- Existential Panic
- Gender Noise

GENDER NOISE

➤ Non-stop narration

- It goes beyond body dysphoria
- Cacophonous
- Intrusive
- Volume changes based on context
 - Never fully goes away



GENDER NOISE

- **Often involves:**
 - Fears about safety
 - how others see you or will react to you
 - how you sound
 - how you walk. talk, gesture
 - Making sense of microaggressions



GENDER NOISE



Cacophony of negative thoughts, voices, and overwhelming processes

- Social narratives
- Cis-normativity
- Gender dysphoria
- Internalized transphobia
- Cultural/religious beliefs
- Social Anxiety
- Fears of not being seen

- Makes it hard to think or focus
- Increases isolation
- Increases rage and oppositional behavior
- Increases anxiety & depression
- Increases suicidality
- Maladaptive coping

GENDER JOY (EUPHORIA)

- The experience of being seen and recognized for who you are.
- Being able to see one's gendered self mirrored back





**“Nature loves variety.
Unfortunately, society
hates it.”**

**~ Milton Diamond, PhD
founder of the Pacific Center for Sex and Society**

STRESSORS SURROUNDING GENDER DIVERSE KIDS

DISCRIMINATION

STEREOTYPES

PREJUDICE

VIOLENCE

MISGENDERED

REJECTION

SOCIAL STATUS

LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT



GENDER DIVERSE YOUTH & SCHOOL CLIMATE



- Pervasive Mistreatment
- Pervasive Violence
 - From students, teachers and staff
- Discriminatory Policies
- School Avoidance

(GLSEN, 2022)

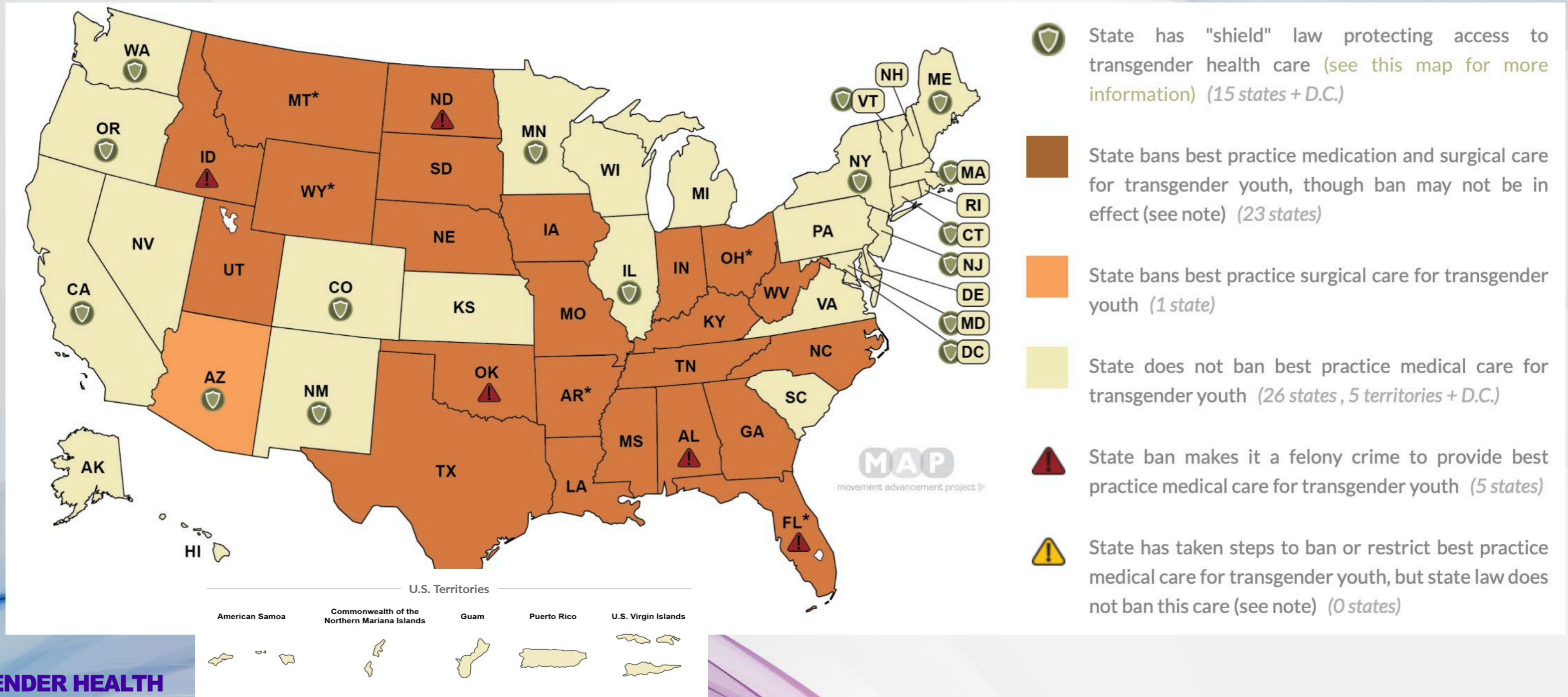
THE MINORITY STRESS CYCLE

- ***Belonging to a sexual/gender minority leads to***
- ***STIGMATIZED BY SOCIETY:*** Being frowned upon, stereotyped, misgendered, discriminated against, erased, experiencing verbal or physical violence, isolation, segregation, lack of resources, results in
- ***MINORITY STRESS:*** Anxiety, depression, PTSD, fear, paranoia, hopelessness, mistrust, lack of self-acceptance, guilt, internalized transphobia.
- ***COPING MECHANISMS:*** Abusing substances, dangerous behavior, victimization, aggression, isolation, disordered eating, SUICIDE.
 - Parents may address this with rejecting behaviors.
 - 41% of trans people attempt suicide by age 30.

SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES



BANS ON MEDICAL CARE FOR TNB2S YOUTH



WHAT ABOUT THIS RAPID ONSET?

- ROGD is not a diagnosis
- It's about conservative parents' experience
- No children have been studied
- Myth of Contagion



WHAT IF THEY REGRET?

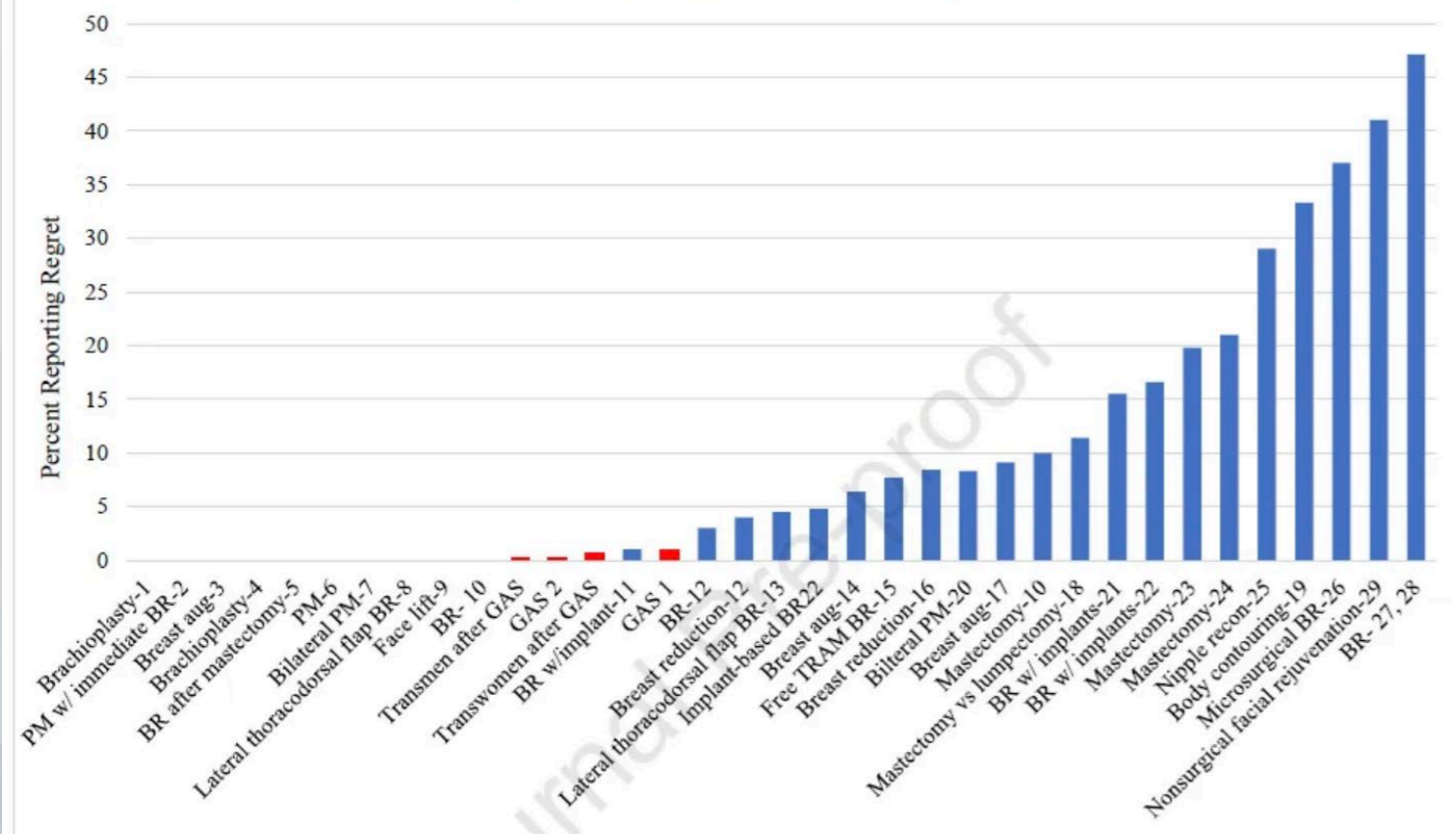


- Can young people understand what they are doing?
- Who should make these decisions?
- What's the data?

SOME DATA ON SURGICAL REGRET

- 14 % of surgical patients express some degree of regret. (Wilson, et al. 2017)
- 13% men expressed regret with treatment decision for prostate cancer, (Wallis, et al, 2021)

Regret After GAS and Plastic Surgery



Rates of Regret for Gender Surgery

- OHSU 2023: 0.3% (6/1989 individuals) requested reversal surgery or transitioned back to their sex assigned at birth over a 6 year period
- 2018 Amsterdam: <1% regret rate for surgery (14 out of over 2,600)

(Thornton, Edalatpour, & Gast, 2024)

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY

CANNOT BE UNDERSTATED

- *Risks factors for youth increase exponentially when families are not accepting*
- *Each move away from rejecting their child and toward tolerance improves the child's well-being, health, and educational success*



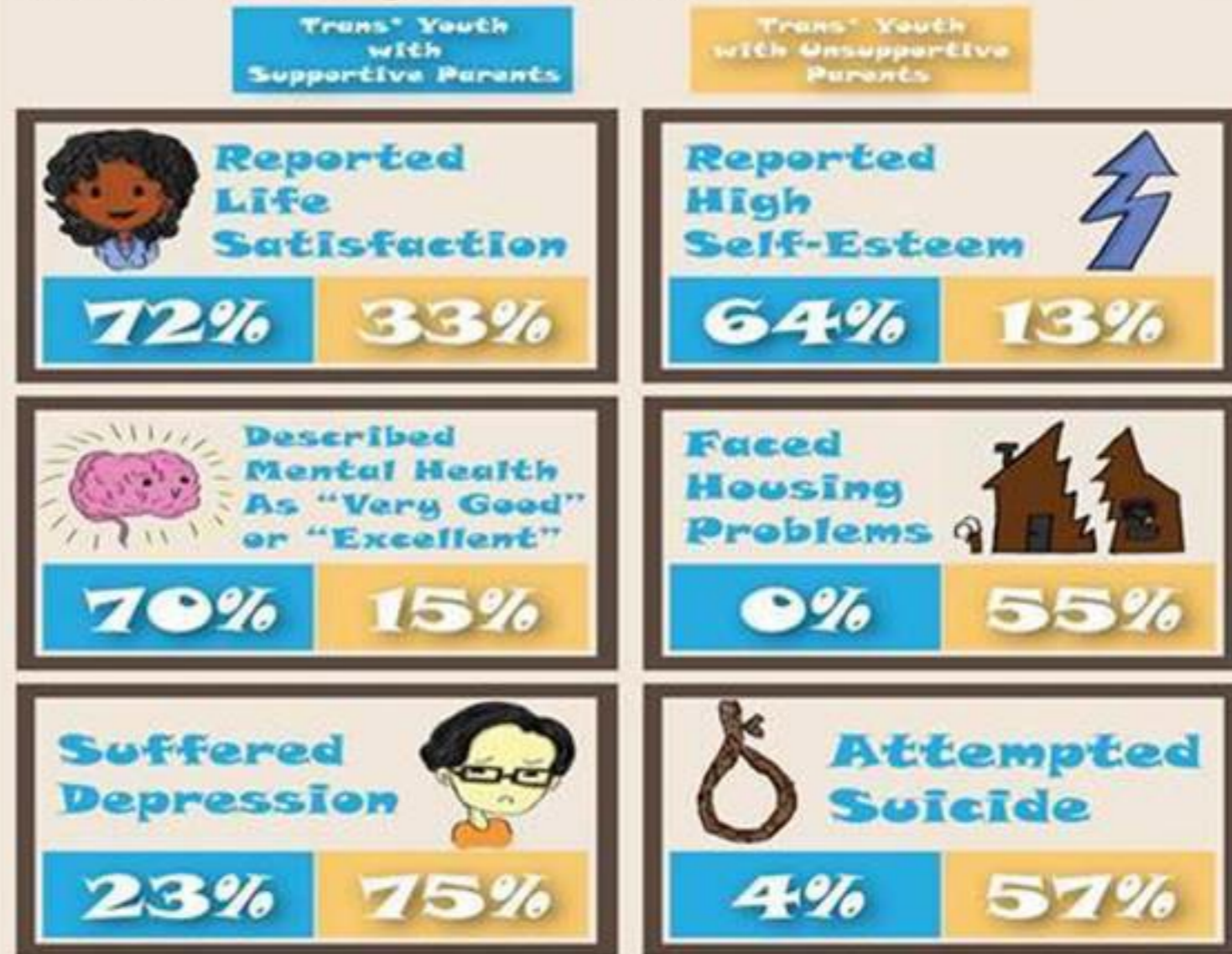
(Bosse et al., 2023, Klein et al., 2023, Lampis et al., 2023, Palmer & Francis, 2023, Price & Green, 2023, Ryan et al., 2009 & 2010, Travers et al, 2012, Watson et al, 2016)

OUTCOMES OF SUPPORT






Why Support for Trans* Youth Matters

Based on a 2012 study of 433 individuals



Travers R, Bauer G, Pyno J, Bradley K, for the Trans PULSE Project; Gale L, Papadimitriou M. Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth: A Report Prepared for Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Delfino Youth Services. 2 October, 2012.

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For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Equality Resources

Infographic Design by Landyn Pan Illustrations by Ethan Lopez

THE IMPACT OF REJECTING FAMILIES

Youth who grew up in highly rejecting families

- *consistently experienced lower self-esteem*
- *increased mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, suicidality & self harm*
- *were more isolated*
- *felt more hopeless about their lives*
- *were more likely to drop out of school*



LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



- 64% of all Gender Expansive youth say their families make them feel bad for their identities
- ○
- Only 23% of all gender-expansive youth feel like they can definitely be themselves at home
- 72% of gender-expansive youth hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people.
- 57% of all gender-expansive youth have been mocked or taunted by their families because of their identities
- **97% of all gender-expansive youth have trouble sleeping at night**

(HRC, 2018)

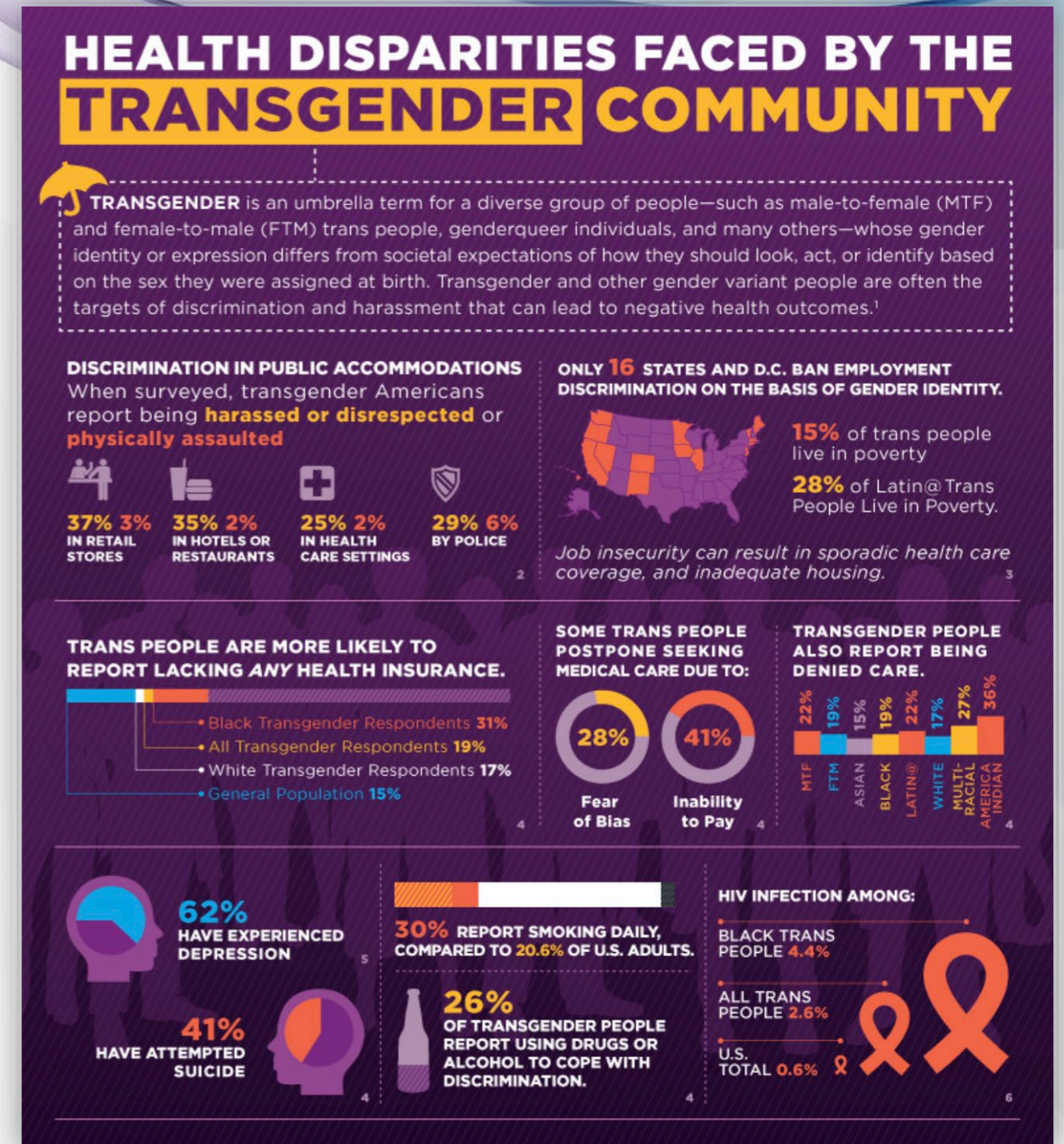
TGE YOUTH OF COLOR

- **They experience multiple facets of stigma and marginalization – it is exponential**
 - More likely to experience violence, harassment, sexual exploitation
- **Forced to continually navigate both racism and transphobia**
 - Often experience racism within LGBTQ communities.
 - And transphobia in their ethnic community



IMPACT OF INTERSECTIONALITY ON HEALTH

- Transgender people experience intersecting forms of social marginalization and are disproportionately affected by health inequities.
- Despite greater ill health, transgender people face significant barriers in accessing health care due to discrimination, harassment, and refusal of care from health care providers



COMMON EXPERIENCES IN MEDICAL SETTINGS



- Discrimination, misgendering, & dead naming
- Discomfort/disgust
- Roughness, fear, violence, avoidance
- being denied treatment
- Confusion even with basic concepts
- Sometimes being given the wrong diagnosis and treatment
- Patronizing, pathologizing and humiliating treatment
 - *trans broken arm syndrome*

CO-OCCURRING ISSUES



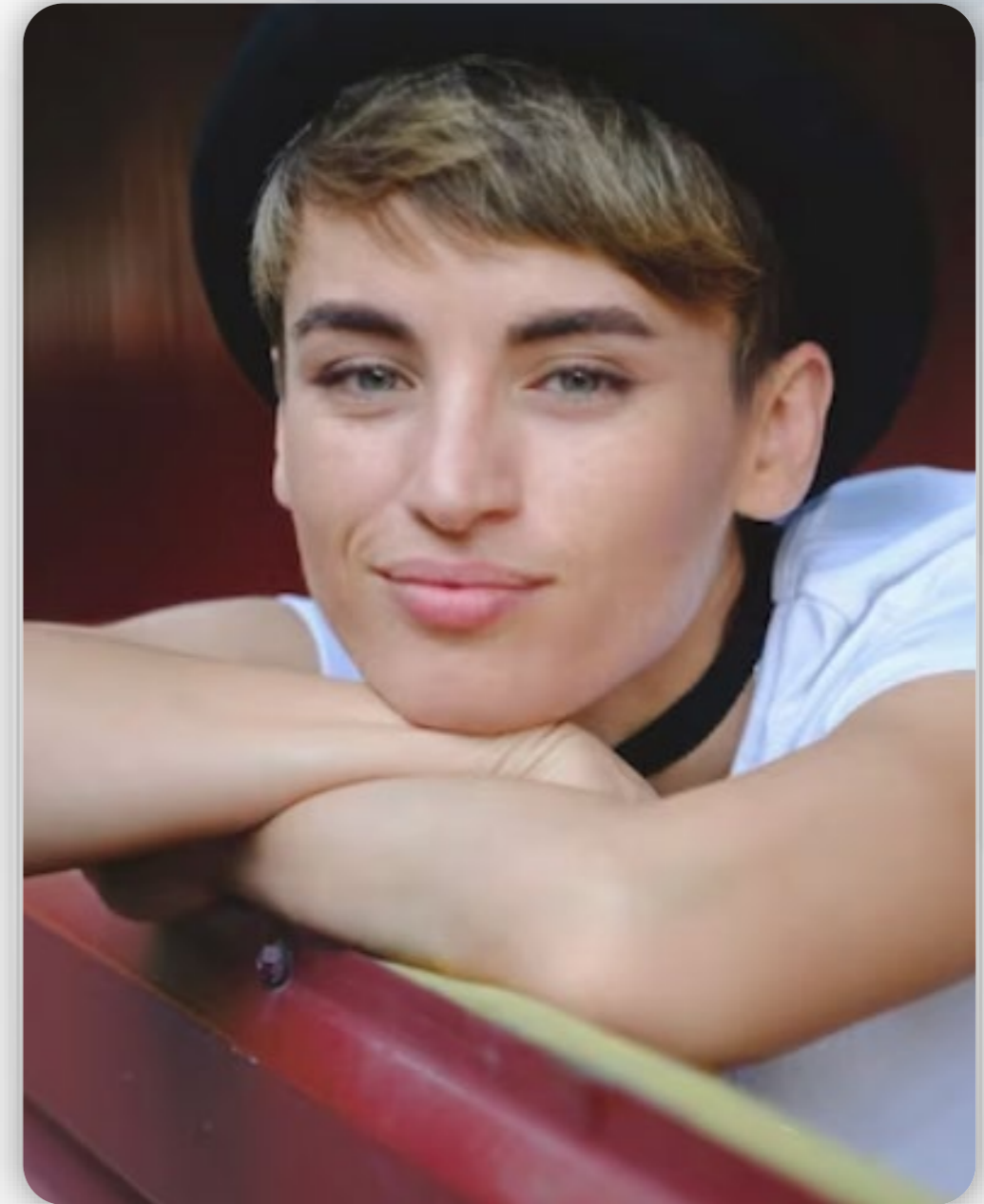
MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES



- *Several mental health disparities have been documented in transgender youth*
 - Depression
 - Suicidality
 - Anxiety
 - Decreased self-esteem
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Eating disorders
 - OCD
 - Substance abuse

CO-OCCURRING DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES

- ***ASD/neurodivergence (good to screen)***
 - ✓ ***Refer for assessment when appropriate***
- **ADHD**
 - There is no evidence that Autism is a cause of gender diversity
 - Symptoms of Autism have not been found to increase after the initiation of hormone therapy

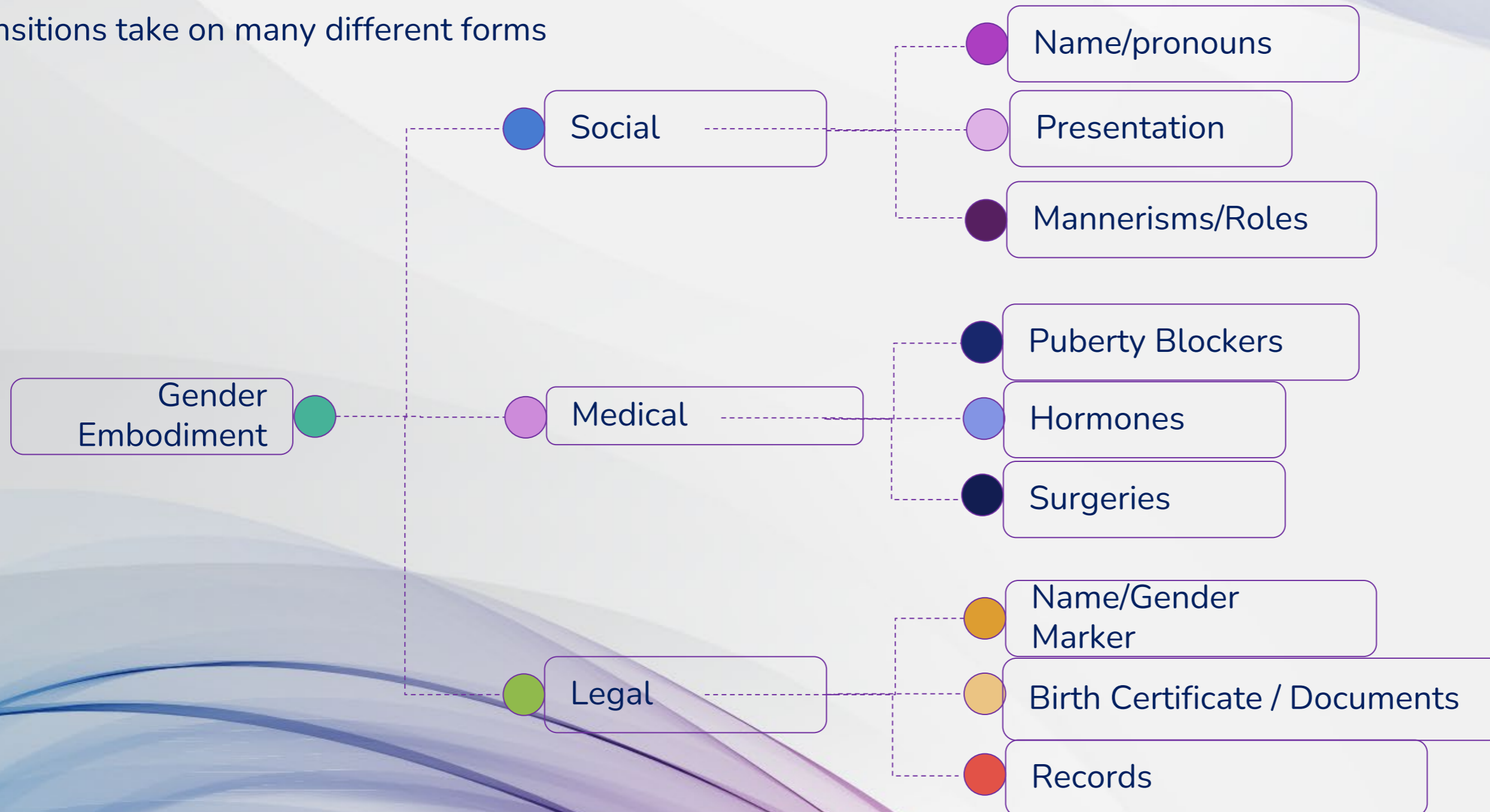


MEDICAL AND SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

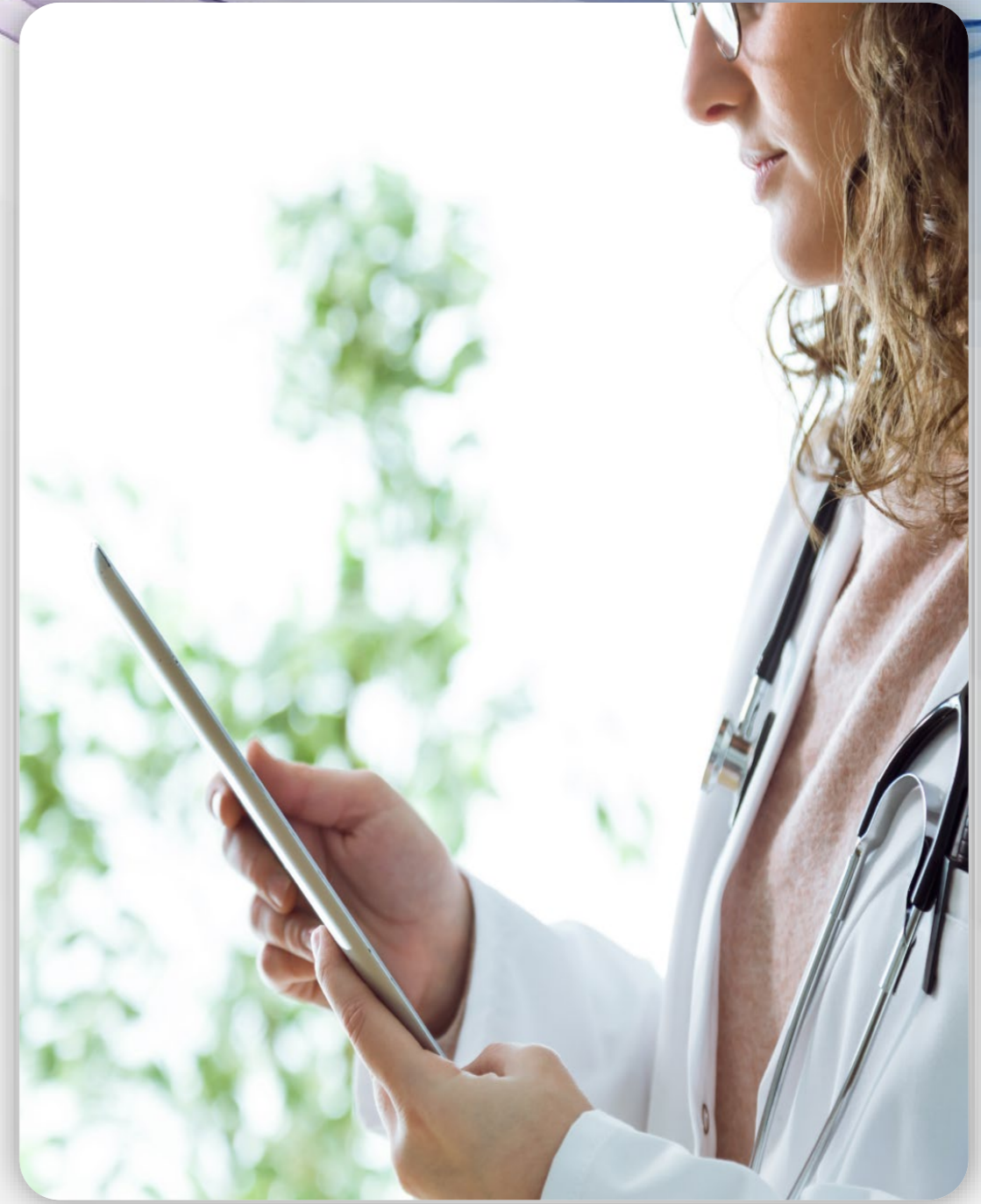


KNOW THE POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS FOR AUTHENTIC GENDER EMBODIMENT

Transitions take on many different forms



BEST PRACTICES



NAME AND PRONOUNS



- **Getting this right is one of the most important things you can do**
- Don't guess a patient's gender identity, regardless of how obvious it might seem to you.
- The best way is to state your pronouns and ask: "what are your pronouns?" Then, stick to them.
- Same goes for name, even if different from the legal/administrative name
- Always use affirmed name and pronoun- never by the legal name (also known as "Deadname") or assigned sex.

ADOLESCENT CARE

- **Involves a Multidisciplinary Team**
- **Includes access to accurate, culturally informed information related to**
 - gender and sexual identities
 - Social & medical embodiment options
 - the impact of family support
 - connections to others with similar experiences through support groups (adolescents and their family)



PARENTAL CONCERNS GENDER AFFIRMING SOCIAL/MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS

- Common concerns regarding social transitions
- Common themes around hormones and blockers
- Issues around surgeries
- Fertility discussions
- There are no neutral options
- Navigating insurance companies and gatekeepers



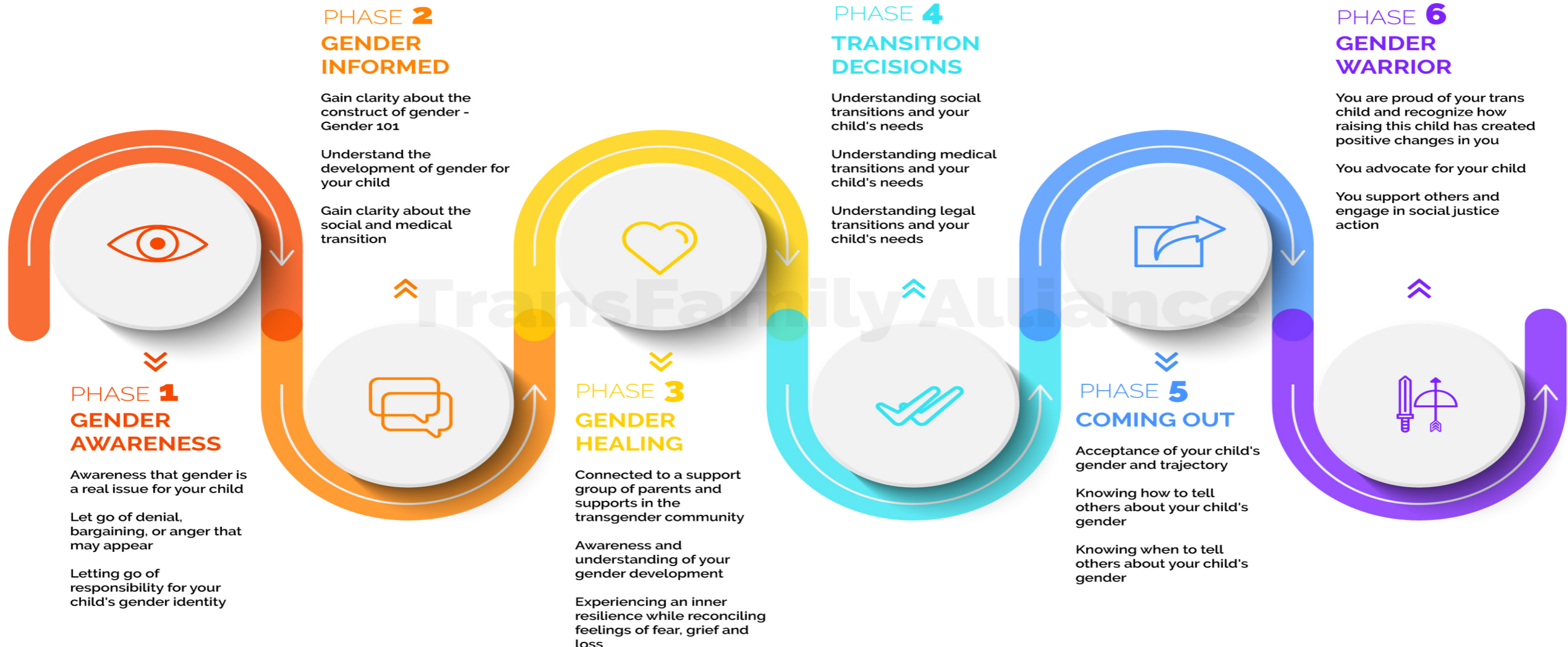
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



- Parents commonly experience high levels of anxiety immediately after learning their youth is TGD
- Since their response to their child predicts that child's long-term physical and mental health outcomes
 - Referrals to educational resources & support communities
 - appropriate referrals for mental health support for parents can be very helpful.

THE TRANSFAMILY GENDER JOURNEY

FROM CONFUSION & FEAR TO CLARITY & CONFIDENCE



SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS



➤ Support Strategies for youth

- Providing affirming care
- Creating safe spaces for expression.
- Referrals for gender-affirming therapy.
- Referrals to support groups.
- Access to gender-affirming resources.
- Social transition support.

SIX BASIC STEPS TO PROVIDING CARE

- *Understand range of gender expressions and differences in embodiment goals*
- *Understand the potential impact of gender dysphoria/noise when treating patients and allow them access to gender affirming resources.*
- *Recognize distinctions between sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and understand differences (and similarities) in health care delivery needs.*
- *Understand access to care is affected by negative experiences with providers and role providers can play in improving quality of life for trans youth.*
- *Understand the impact of minority stress on youth and families.*
- *Make your agencies more trans-friendly*





THANKS!
ANY QUESTIONS?

Gender Therapy Resources: Books

- Transgender Children & Youth: Cultivating Pride and Joy with Families in Transition –Elijah Nealy
- The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens -- Stephanie A. Brill
- A Clinician’s Guide to Gender-Affirming Care – Sand Chang, Anneliese Singh, lore m. dickey PhD
- Queer and Transgender Resilience Workbook -- Anneliese Singh
- Gender Quest Workbook – Rylan Jay Testa, Deborah Coolhart, Jayme Peta
- Nurturing Queer Youth – Linda Stone-fish & Rebeccah Harvey
- You and Your Gender Identity: A Guide to Discovery – Dara Hoffman-Fox
- <https://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/looking-at-gender-identity-with-childrens-books/>

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Founder & CEO

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<https://www.transfamilyalliance.com>

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Mind the Gap

<https://www.genderyouthproviders.com>

SOC8 GEI Certified Member / Mentor / GEI Faculty

World Professional Association

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