



## Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is new in *DSM-5* and reflects a change in conceptualization of its defining features by emphasizing the phenomenon of “gender incongruence” rather than cross-gender identification, as was the case in *DSM-IV-TR* gender identity disorder. In contrast to the dichotomized *DSM-IV-TR* gender identity disorder diagnosis, type and severity of gender dysphoria can be inferred from the number and type of indicators and from the severity measures. The experienced gender incongruence and resulting gender dysphoria may take many forms. Gender dysphoria thus is considered to be a multi-category concept rather than a dichotomy and acknowledges the wide variation of gender-incongruent conditions. In the child criteria for gender dysphoria, “strong desire to be another gender” replaces the previous “repeatedly stated desire” to capture the situation of some children who, in a coercive environment, may not verbalize the desire to be of another gender. The subtyping on the basis of sexual orientation is removed because the distinction is no longer considered clinically useful due to lack of clinical utility.

The questions below are from *DSM-5 Self-Exam Questions: Test Questions for the Diagnostic Criteria*, which may be reordered from American Psychiatric Publishing by clicking [here](#). The book, available January 2014, contains 500 questions for all the categories of psychiatric disorders and includes Section III. The questions were developed under the leadership of Philip Muskin, M.D., a professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

1. Which of the following must be present to make a diagnosis of gender dysphoria in children?

a) There must be a co-occurring dis-

order of sex development (DSD)

b) There must be a strong desire to be the other gender or an insistence that the person is the other gender

c) There must be a strong dislike of one’s sexual anatomy

d) The child must have stated a wish to change gender

e) There must be a strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that match the experienced gender

**Correct Answer: B.** There must be a strong desire to be the other gender or an insistence that the person is the other gender.

**Rationale:** Gender dysphoria in children must be accompanied by the strong desire to be the other gender or an insistence that one is the other gender. The inclusion of this criterion in *DSM-5* makes the diagnosis more conservative. The strong desire need not be stated aloud, as *DSM-5* recognizes that social and/or cultural factors may inhibit this expression. There may be a strong dislike of one’s sexual anatomy or a strong desire for sex characteristics that match the experienced gender, but these are not necessary factors for diagnosis. There may be a co-occurring disorder of sex development (DSD) but this is not a necessary factor for diagnosis.

2. In *DSM-5*, which of the following statements are true about the words “gender” and “transgender?”

a) “Gender” refers to the biological indicators of male or female seen in an individual

b) “Gender” refers to the individual’s initial assignment of male or female, usually given at birth

c) “Gender” refers to the individual’s lived role in society or his/her identification as male or female

d) A “transgender” individual is

someone who has undergone a social transition from male to female or female to male

e) A “transgender” individual is someone who has sought sex reassignment treatment of some kind

**Correct Answer: B.** “Gender” refers to the individual’s initial assignment of male or female, usually given at birth.

**Rationale:** The words “sex,” “gender,” “transgender,” and “transsexual” are complex and should be used properly. In general, sex refers to biology, and gender refers to a lived role, or experience. “Transgender” includes many individuals who experience gender incongruence and/or dysphoria but who may not seek sex reassignment or social transition. Transsexual designates individuals who have sought or undergone role transition or sex reassignment treatment of some kind.

3. Which of the following diagnoses has been eliminated in *DSM-5*?

a) gender identity disorder

b) gender dysphoria

c) pedophilic disorder

d) transvestic disorder

e) none of the above

**Correct Answer: A.** gender identity disorder

**Rationale:** A major change in *DSM-5* is that the diagnosis of gender identity disorder (GID) has been eliminated. There is no consensus in the field about when or whether atypical gender identities represent a disorder. *DSM-5* focuses on gender dysphoria (which replaces both the former GID and gender incongruence).

This term emphasizes dysphoria as the clinical problem, rather than on either identity or incongruence, and is therefore more descriptive. The concept of gender dysphoria is also no longer dichotomized between male and female, allowing for an infinite range of gender experience.

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