



**Developmental
Disabilities
Planning Council**

Easy Read Edition

A Self-Advocate's Guide to Gender- Affirming Health Care

**Part 6: How can I find support
as a transgender or nonbinary
person?**

How can I find support as a transgender or nonbinary person?



If you are transgender or nonbinary, you might want to find other people who are transgender or nonbinary.

Finding Trans Support Groups



If you are transgender or nonbinary, you might want to find a support group for transgender and nonbinary people.



A **support group** is a group of people who all have a similar interest.



You can talk about your life as a transgender or nonbinary person in a support group.



You can get advice about your problems in a support group.



There are lots of different support groups for transgender and nonbinary people.



Some meet online.



Some meet in person.



Some groups are for all transgender and nonbinary people.



Other groups are only for some transgender and nonbinary people.

For example:



- Groups only for transgender and nonbinary people who live in a specific area



- Groups only for transgender and nonbinary people of color



- Groups only for transgender women



- Groups only for transgender men



- Groups only for nonbinary people



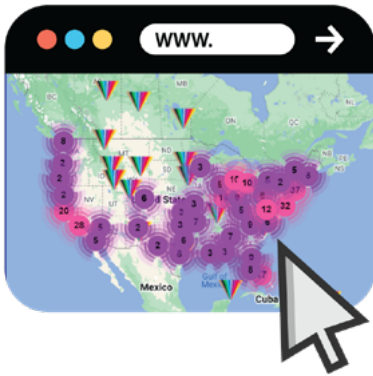
- Groups only for transgender and nonbinary people with disabilities. (We will talk more about these groups in a later section.)



Many LGBTQ+ centers offer support groups for transgender and nonbinary people.



To find a LGBTQ+ center near you, you can do a web search for “LGBTQ+ center [your city or area].”



Or you can go to [Center Link's map of LGBTQ+ centers](#).



There are also online support groups for transgender and nonbinary people.



You can do a web search for "online transgender support group."

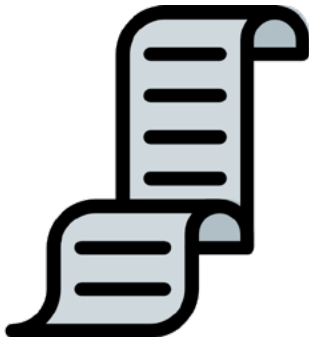


Or you can look at [QueerDoc's list of online resources and support groups](#).

Finding a Therapist or Counselor Who Works With Transgender People



You may want to talk to a therapist or counselor if you are transgender or nonbinary.



People have lots of reasons they might want to talk to a therapist or counselor about being transgender or nonbinary.

Some of these reasons are:

Dealing with Gender Dysphoria



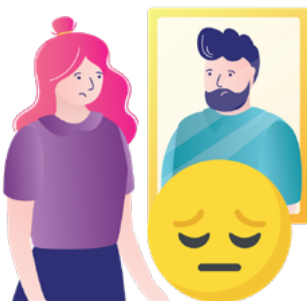
Gender dysphoria can cause a lot of stress.



Gender dysphoria can hurt how you view yourself.



Gender dysphoria can be feeling bad about how your body looks.



Gender dysphoria can be feeling bad about the gender other people see you as.



Gender dysphoria can be feeling bad about how your voice sounds.



Gender dysphoria can be feeling bad about wearing clothes that match your birth assigned gender.

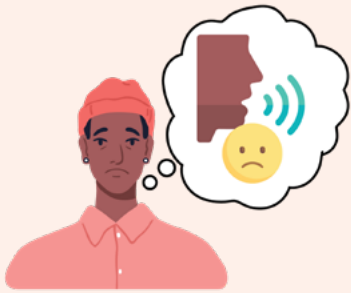


Understanding what makes you feel gender dysphoria can help you change things to feel more comfortable.

For example:



Jess is nonbinary.



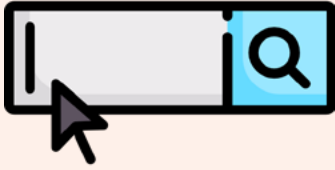
Jess feels uncomfortable about how their voice sounds.



Jess feels uncomfortable about how people guess their gender based on their voice.



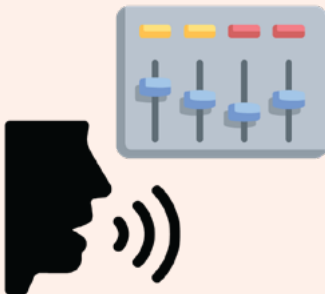
Jess feels gender dysphoria around their voice.



Jess searches the internet for information on changing their voice.



Jess learns about vocal coaching.



Vocal coaching is when someone teaches you how to control your voice.



Jess finds a vocal coach in their area to take classes with.



Jess begins feeling more comfortable with their voice.



The vocal coaching helps with Jess's gender dysphoria.

Dealing with Transphobia from Other People.



Transphobia is when someone else treats you badly because you are transgender or nonbinary.



Transphobia can show up in many different ways.

Some of the ways transphobia can look like are:



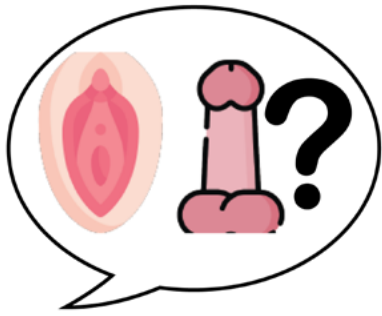
- Your boss saying you cannot use the restrooms at work because you are transgender or nonbinary.



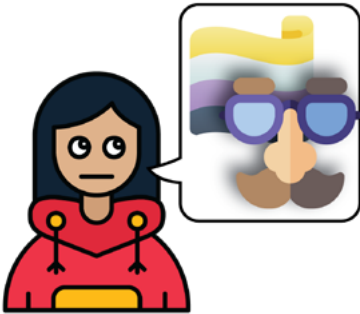
- A teacher saying the name you want to be called is not “real” because you are transgender or nonbinary.



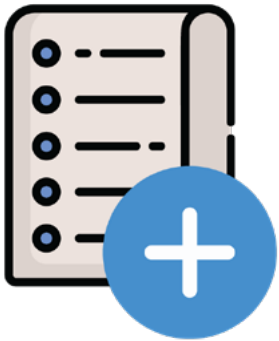
- A family member calling you “it” instead of your actual pronouns because you are transgender or nonbinary.



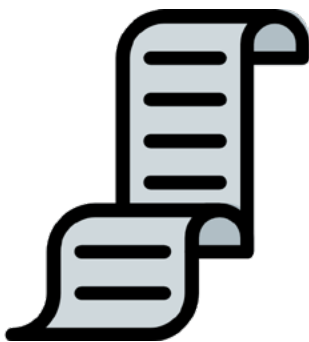
- A stranger asking you what genitals (sexual body parts) you have.



- A person telling you “that is not a real thing” when you tell them you are nonbinary.



These are not the only ways transphobia can show up.



Transphobia can show up in a lot of other ways.



Transphobia is meant to make you feel like there is something wrong with you.



Transphobia is meant to make you feel like it is bad to be transgender or nonbinary.



Transphobia is bullying.



Transphobia is a kind of discrimination.



Discrimination is treating people badly based on who they are.



Transphobia hurts people.

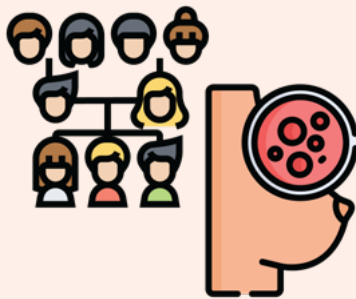


Transphobia can be physically dangerous.

For example:



Mikhail is a trans man.



Breast cancer runs in Mikhail's family.



Mikhail checks his chest each month for any strange lumps.



Mikhail finds a lump in his chest.



Mikhail goes to his general care doctor.



Mikhail's doctor has been rude to him in the past around health care needs.



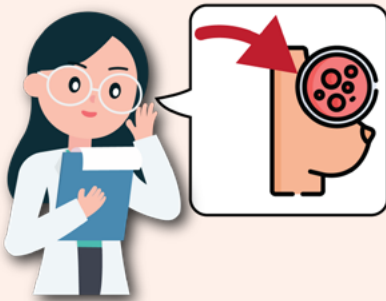
Mikhail's doctor insists the lump must be from Mikhail's top surgery.



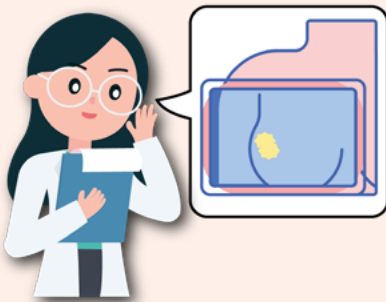
Mikhail knows his top surgery was several years ago and did not cause any lumps.



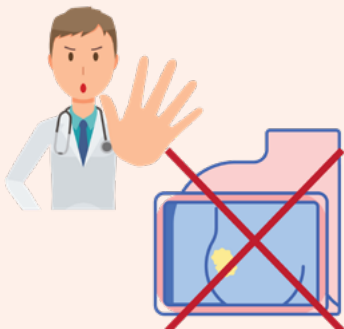
Mikhail finds another doctor to do a cancer screening.



The new doctor finds that the lump is safe, but could become cancer later.



The new doctor tells Mikhail he needs to get screened every six months.



If Mikhail had listened to his first doctor, he would not get cancer screenings.



Mikhail's first doctor was being transphobic towards Mikhail.



The first doctor's transphobia put Mikhail's health in danger.



For more about transphobia and other kinds of discrimination, you can read ASAN's toolkit "[Fighting for Fairness: It Starts With You!](#)"



It can be really hard to deal with transphobia.



Transphobia can make you feel really bad about yourself.



Transphobia can make you feel unsafe.



Transphobia can get in the way of living your life.



You can talk to a therapist or counselor about transphobia.

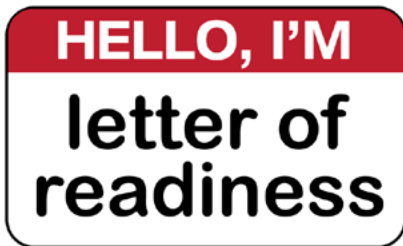


A therapist or counselor can help you find ways to cope with transphobia.

Needing a Letter of Readiness to Start Hormones or Get Surgery.



Some doctors that provide gender-affirming health care make you get a letter from a therapist or counselor first.



This is called a **letter of readiness**.

A letter of readiness usually says:



- You want to start hormones or get surgery.



- You understand the risks of starting hormones or getting surgery.
Risks are things that can go wrong.



- You do not have other illnesses or disabilities that could be causing your gender dysphoria.
Or, if you do have other illnesses or disabilities, that they are under control.



- The therapist or counselor thinks you are ready to start hormones or get surgery.

Finding the Right Therapist or Counselor



There are a lot of therapists and counselors out there!



Not all of them are good choices if you want to talk about being transgender or nonbinary.



You want to find a therapist or counselor that has training in working with transgender and nonbinary people.



Or, you want to find a therapist or counselor that has worked with transgender or nonbinary people before.

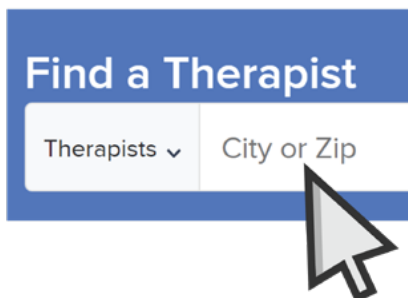
You can find a therapist or counselor who specializes in working with transgender and nonbinary people in a few ways:



- Do a web search for “trans competent therapist [**your city or area**].”



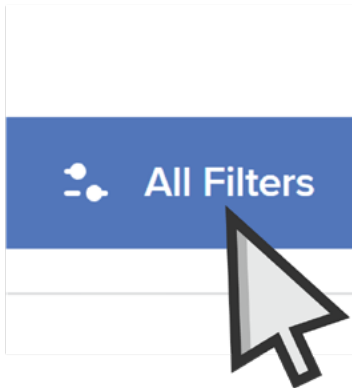
- Go to <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>.



Enter your city or ZIP Code in the box that says “City or Zip.”



This will take you to a listing of therapists in your area.



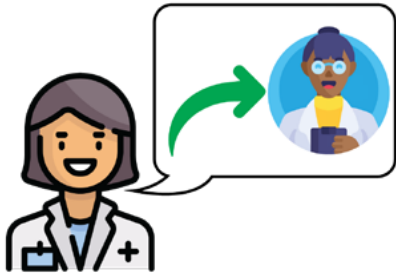
Click on the button that says "All Filters."



A menu of options will appear.
Click on the word "Transgender."



This will take you to a list of therapists who specialize in transgender issues in your area.



- If you are already working with a doctor or clinic to access gender-affirming health care, ask them for a referral to a therapist or counselor.

For example:



Chantelle is a Black trans woman.



Chantelle wants to find a therapist.



She wants a therapist who works with trans women.



She wants a therapist who is Black.



She searches on the internet for “trans competent Black therapists” in her city.



She finds a few therapists that might be good.



She calls each therapist to talk to them.



One therapist can not take new people right now.



Two therapists she does not feel comfortable with after their short talk.



Chantelle likes three of the therapists.



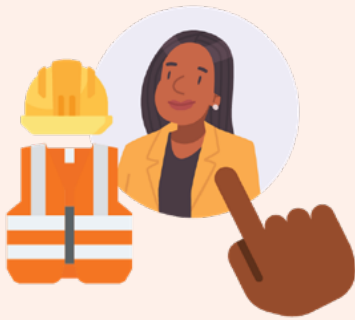
She makes an appointment with each therapist she likes.



Chantelle goes to her three therapy appointments.



After her therapy appointments she thinks about how each therapist made her feel.



Chantelle picks the therapist who she felt safest with.

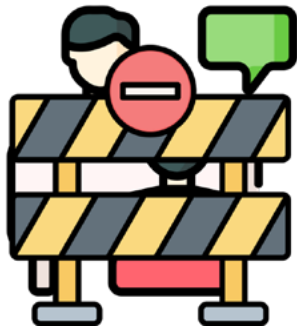
Barriers to Getting Therapy



Some transgender and nonbinary people face barriers to getting therapy or counseling.



Sometimes, these barriers are small but annoying.



Other times, these barriers are very big.

Some types of barriers transgender and nonbinary people face in getting therapy and counseling are:



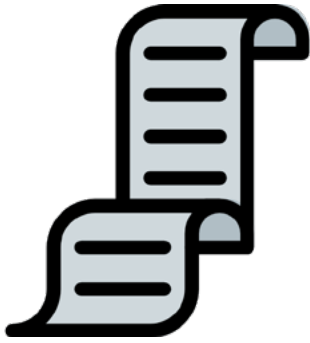
- There are not a lot of therapists who specialize in working with transgender and nonbinary people.



Not all therapists have studied how to work with transgender and nonbinary people.



A lot of therapists do not know much about transgender and nonbinary issues or health care.



- A lot of the therapists who do work with transgender and nonbinary people already have a lot of clients.



These therapists may not have open appointments for new clients.



So, transgender and nonbinary people who want to see these therapists may have to wait a long time.



- Some therapists say they help transgender and nonbinary people.



But these therapists really do conversion therapy.



Conversion therapy is not real therapy.



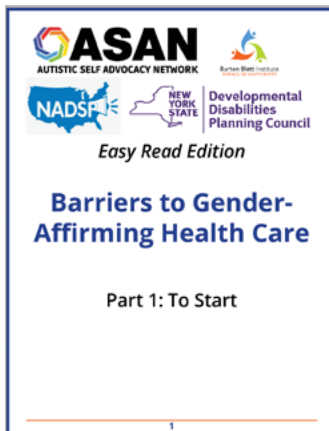
It is ways of trying to make transgender and nonbinary people not be transgender or nonbinary anymore.



Conversion therapy does not work.



Conversion therapy hurts transgender and nonbinary people.



We talk more about these barriers in [our toolkit “Barriers to Gender-Affirming Health Care.”](#)

Opportunities Specifically for LGBTQ+ People with Disabilities



There are support groups specifically for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities.



Not all of these groups are specifically for transgender and nonbinary people.



Some of them are open to anyone who is LGBTQ+ and has a disability.



Some support groups are for transgender and nonbinary people with a specific disability or kind of disability.



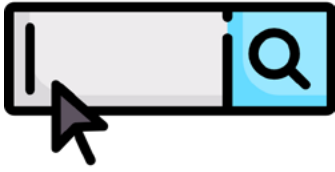
For example, there are support groups for autistic transgender and nonbinary people.



There are some support groups for LGBTQ+ people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



These support groups are usually called **Rainbow Support Groups**.



You can do a search for “rainbow support group disability [your city or area].”



If your city or area does not have a Rainbow Support Group, you could start one.