



Children's National Medical Center
Division of Psychiatry
The Gender and Sexuality Development Program (GSDP)

A Selection of Quotes from
Members of our Parent List-serve

1. Our Sons

Meet My Son

My son is 6 and has been playing with Barbie™ from age 2. Although he plays with “boy” toys too, he prefers dolls, hello kitty, Bratz™ dolls and so on...

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

I have a 4-year-old son, Adam who loves dress up, princesses and most other “girl things.” He is a sweet and happy child and currently has no problems with others’ reactions in pre-school.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

My son is 6.5 years old , interested in girl toys, dresses, games etc since he was close to 3y/o. My husband and I were waiting for this phase to pass, in the mean time, we allowed him to play with his little sister's toys and his fake hair (anything on top of his head) whenever he wanted, but at the end of the game we would encourage him to play with more traditional boy toys.

By his 5th birthday finally we got smart and joined the support group, and since then we have wholeheartedly supported his interests in toys, dress up clothes and friends, and slowly, slowly we have bought him regular girl clothes, one t-shirt at first, then 3 or 4, then few girl pajamas, then one pair of sandals, and just few weeks ago he got his very first regular dress.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I am so amazed at the similarities among our boys. What is the deal with mermaids and the allure to them?

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

Garrett's favorite color is pink, he loves to play dress up, likes dolls, cooking, theatre, gymnastics, Barbie™ and the Disney™ Princesses. He has also always gravitated toward female friendships... because he has more in common with girls, I suspect.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

When my 7 yr. old was 2 1/2, he asked for a dress. I'm thinking this story may be familiar to some of you parents. He would only pick up a truck if he wanted to get to the Barbie™ doll underneath. He is a fabulous kid, he just likes things that most boys don't.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

My son, Mikey, brings us to the list-serve. For at least a year--probably more--he's manifested a persistent interest in all things girl. He has, to my recollection, never

played with a truck or car (unless it's a Barbie™ car!) and rarely plays with the boys in his preschool class. For awhile, we attributed this to the fact that he deeply emulates his older sister and plays a great deal with her and her best friend across the street. He's also incredibly verbal and imaginative, and thus finds parity with more girls than boys his age. But the "non-boyish" behavior is unvarying and consistent and, to me, appears to be quite deeply rooted. In any event, our concern is that we parent him well. So far, he's not been the subject of much teasing and his pre-school is by and large (with occasional lapses) comfortable letting him be whoever he wants to be (most of the time he playacts with his female friends--today, for example, they were all characters from the "Little Mermaid™"; Mikey was "Morgana"). Most importantly, so are we. But the complexities appear in all sorts of ways--what to let him be for Halloween? Do we give him the "Polly Pocket™" set he wants for Hanukkah/Christmas?--and next year he will enter kindergarten and a much more conservative educational environment for which we (and he) will need to be prepared. So I'm eager to how other parents manage these and other issues. Like others, I'm really glad to be able to be a part of a virtual support group.

Mother of a 4 year-old boy

I am a new member with a seven year old son. My son has always been very interested in "girl" things (dress-up, dolls, Disney™ Princesses, etc.) He is not very athletic, but loves to sing, dance, and act.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

Our son William is 5 and a half (6 in July). He is a wonderful, sweet, fun-loving, affectionate, articulate boy who loves trains as much as he loves dressing up in his twin sister's princess clothes and putting on shows. He doesn't like organized sports and plays almost exclusively with girls (claiming the other boys are too rough).

Father of a 5 year-old boy

Since having a second son I have become more convinced of that as my younger son is so different from his brother, he is physical and very loud, doesn't like playing with girls, has friendships with boys that vary day to day, while my other son has always had very intense friendships. As a preschooler my eldest son was never interested in rough and tumble games, preferring the company of girls in his peer group. He was an early reader/writer and at a very early age had long concentration which seemed atypical for a boy of his age. At the same time he showed no interest in toys such as guns, pirate games etc preferring dressups and playing with dolls and soft toys. He is not interested in ball/team games, preferring individual sports. He is a very good swimmer and has participated in 2 children's triathlons. He is above average in intellect, with particular talents in mathematics and science. Since starting school his interests have broadened however his closest friends are girls and he still shows clear preferences for girl's toys. The other significant issue for me is that on several occasions throughout his life - including one very recently he has told myself and other people that he wants to be a girl.

Mother of a 9 year-old boy

Carter has a large collection of Barbie™ and in imaginative play likes to be the 'sister' or the 'mother' or the female superhero to his brother's male counterpart.

Mother of a 3 year-old boy

I have a picture of my son, at 15 months old, wearing a purple tutu and twirling to a figure skating show on TV. He is now, at age 5, the best in his skating class. No interest in Hockey, mind you...but crazy about figure skating...since he was a baby...

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

My son, Trevor, has had an interest in Barbie or as long as I can remember. When he was three I bought his first one, his father then made him take to Goodwill as a part of a "deal". Over the years we have bought new ones, but kept it a secret from Dad, because he gets so upset. In the last week, I found out through my mother that Trevor doesn't like to keep secrets and talked candidly about how he hates to hide things from his dad and wishes he could just yell, I LIKE BARBIES!!! So Trevor and I talked, I told him it did not have to be a secret anymore. I was so excited about the joy he had on his face, to be released from that stress. I didn't realize that the secret I thought would make him so happy, was causing such stress inside. It was because of something I read from the listserv that made me talk to Trevor, so now every time his dad says something we have agreed that he will say, I am a boy who likes girl things. It has been a great coping skill

for Trevor at home. It is so great that he is even starting to use it at school. The other great advancement is that for Halloween he wants to be a witch, his dad told him that is fine he can choose whatever and we even bought a wig!!! I am so excited to see how all of this is allowing him to be who he is and not who others think he should be!

Thanks for the opportunity to share, it is great to know that others out there that have similar issues.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

All Kinds of Boys

When he expresses concerns about his feelings, we tell him that there are all kinds of boys – boys who like boy stuff, boys who like girl stuff, and boys who like both. We told him that we love him no matter what he likes and that he can play with toys that he enjoys.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

It's a challenge for us parents to get the concept across—against the whole patriarchal culture that is fighting us—that real normal includes a huge range of boys out there beyond the roughhouse types (which the world needs too, but would appreciate less if it wasn't so attuned to violence), so that our sons are comfortable with being their own kind of boy, and realizing that they are fitting well within the range of normal.

Mother of a 10 year-old boy

My Child's Self-esteem

We each have our own boundaries and ideas of what we are comfortable with, and from that place we parent our children. We must each consider the environment we live in, how supportive or hostile it might be, how open to considering new ideas are the people around us. My approach has been to work as hard as I can to change the world

to make it safer for Brook to be who Brook is, rather than to try to change Brook to fit in to a world that is rejecting of differences. My partner focuses more on helping Brook cope with a world that won't always understand or be kind to Brook. Both things are important. We talk with Brook about being a trailblazer, that the path Brook is making is not an easy one, and that it takes much courage to show up as who you are and let other people be who they are. My hope is that Brook will develop the strength to move through life with the self-esteem and confidence that will make others appreciate rather than try to hurt him/her.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

The most important thing I think we do as parents is to try to instill in our children a sense of self-love and self-esteem, a self-love and self-esteem that is the best armor we can provide our children against the inevitable slings and arrows that will come their way. How to do that – and at the same time equipping them to live in the world as it is, rather than in the world of which we dream – seems to me to be the central question and the central problem.

Father of a 5 year-old boy

Karl and I can help by fostering (not repressing) his strong sense of self. For us, this will mean no more “talks” with Garrett about HIDING himself in any way, shape or form. We’re going to try letting him be, enjoying this time we have. When he is hurt, we’ll let him handle it and be there to talk about it and love him. It’s going to be difficult but, I really feel it is the choice that will serve him best.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

Thank you for reminding me again what my priorities should be: [it’s a choice between] my son’s sense of acceptance, love and support, or what people that don’t really matter a think of us.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I think that GV produces stress no matter what we all overtly say to the kids. I fear it is our own inability to completely accept the kids as they are, effortlessly, always and instantly, down to the last nuance of facial expression and gesture which creates some of this stress, and that the world creates the rest of it.

Father of a 7 year-old boy

My Child’s Safety

Perhaps the best protection of our children, is not to have them deny who they are in order to try to fit in, but to help them be proud of who they are, to find healthy ways to cope with others who don't understand, to learn to discern if people are just confused or trying to be mean, and to seek people around them that honor and embrace the wholeness of who they are.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

It is not like we are making him a target allowing him to wear certain types of clothes. He is going to be a target no matter what, his walk, his mannerisms, anything. But if

now he dares to walk outside the gender lines, little by little, with his parents behind him, maybe, when he is older it will be a little easier for him

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

2. **Our Daughters**
(pending)

3. **My Struggles**

A Million Questions

I think the "what did I do to make my kid this way" feeling is common. As a parent of any child we feel so much responsibility to raise a happy, polite, etc. little person who contributes positively in this world. As parents to children who are most likely going to have a hard road ahead...I think the pressure is even greater. I know for myself I often wonder if I was too strict and as my little boy was being aggressive (as a toddler) I was constantly saying things like "gentle" and "not so loud". ... I don't know how to get rid of that questioning of "did I make my son this way". I wish I had the answer. Maybe some of the other parents have a better idea.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

Does anyone else still struggle with what if any parental role contributed to our children's preferences for all things of the opposite sex? Though I try to let my child just be himself, enjoy whatever he wants to, I have moments of mental resistance still, after 2 years of awareness that this is not simply a phase. I have not yet completely let go of the "my part" theory. How have others done it so much> quicker than me?

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

He put on pink lipstick and he was so happy. He said that he feels pretty when he has this stuff on. I am so completely confused and upset. I love my son more than words can say and I am terrified for his future! Am I doing the right thing? What if I am not? What if I am making things worse for him?

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

I have to say Thank Goodness! I feel a little more "normal". I too, have experienced immense guilt and embarrassment, then more guilt! It is sometimes hard to quiet that inner voice that really just wants to shout "why can't you be like all the other boys", but then I think of what a great kid he really is, and I feel horrible that I have these passing moments of frustration with him.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

You said something that really struck me. I too, never anticipated that of all the issues/struggles/challenges of parenthood that THIS would be one of them. At times it feels very surreal and frustrating. Again that guilt sets in, because I have so much to be grateful for. I have two healthy and happy little boys, but I know that for Caden the road is going to be long and bumpy, and that scares and saddens me. At times it is very overwhelming.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

Did I Cause It?

It is so clear, raising [my two sons], two years apart, that we had nothing to do with making Dave gender variant. The only thing we have done is to allow Dave to express himself.

Father of an 8 year-old boy

We all have anxieties as parents, none of us does it perfectly, and people seem to feel justified in using that vulnerability to "explain" why our children are the way they are....When we succumb to our worries that somehow we have done something to "make" our gender variant children this way, we are buying into the "Disorder" paradigm; that is, we are implicitly agreeing that there is something wrong with who our children are, rather than seeing them as part of the broad spectrum of human experience....While I worry for our children's safety and future in a world that is narrow-minded, and violently reactive to differences, I would not change anything about who Chris is.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

Setting Limits

Regarding allowing my son to hang the Bratz™ poster in his room, the only thing I could say would be "would you allow a daughter to hang the poster?", i.e. is it a moral/taste thing, or a gender thing?

Father of a 12 year-old boy

His absolute favorite toy that he plays with almost 24/7 is Barbie™ . Ken™ has disappeared somewhere, buried in the yard I guess :) So my quandary comes in am I suppose to fill my house and go and buy all of the "girl" stuff he wants???? Where do I draw the line, is there a line, should there be a line??? How much do I give in and how much do I say enough is enough? I have no idea with what my boundaries should/not be. At this moment in time I have not reached some pinnacle point where I am comfortable with turning my playroom for my sons into a girls toy retreat haven...I have a younger son who loves the "boy" stuff....in regards to shoes...been there. On one shopping trip he wanted the pink and white flowered shoes, we argued and ended up leaving the store, because I refused him the shoes. He was mad, and crying, I was mad and crying...the guilt again...but the lines is blurred as you said. I can not encourage something that sets him up for punishment by others, but trying to explain that some things "stay at home" makes him want to know why it is not okay

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I also find it difficult to navigate his identity in public. He is often invited to "dress-up" birthday parties. While the other boys put on police costumes, etc., Mikey always dresses up as a princess or fairy. I don't try to dissuade him--why would I?--but I find myself gritting my teeth when other parents look on and trying to calibrate my own reactions and responses. I trust that Mikey never knows I'm struggling. I have truly come to believe that we offer a deeply limited set of identities for boys and girls and

that our culture's binary thinking about gender is just plain wrong. And I truly believe that I accept my son fully and love him wholly for who he is. But I also need to make space for the pain this might cause me--both on his behalf and in my role as a parent trying to come to terms with my own gender role socialization, and with what it means to parent my particular, wonderful, but complicated child

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

My son who is 5 shows pretty much all the signs of gender variance, and I think deep down we have always known something is different. He is very happy, go-lucky and well adjusted. The problem is my internal reactions. I am very open minded, and love my sons more than anything, but I find myself feeling very frustrated and sad by the conversations, comments, and some actions by my son. I find myself getting agitated in constant conversations about Barbie™, mermaids, and wanting Barbie™ bathing suits, and every single picture he draws is of a mermaid. I know it is okay, and I engage in the conversations and hang his pictures up with pride, but I have this internal turmoil. At his soccer game which is a team sport he loves and does well at, yesterday I had a moment of deep sadness and frustration, as he was out playing the game happily another mom said "boy he is having fun, he just prances all over the field" it was not mean or picking on him, but for the first time I really noticed he does not run around like the other boys, he does seem to dance on the field. I know the literature talks about mourning what may never be, and I see that I have to do that...but I feel a little overwhelmed with sadness and frustration. I also realize that I may sound petty, thus I need to know if anyone else has felt this way, and how to start dealing with these emotions. Thanks.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I think setting limits is okay where something like makeup is concerned. As our kids get older into the teen years, we will probably have to set social limits as well, have curfews, etc. no matter what their orientation. I grew up in a family with 4 girls, no brothers, but we weren't allowed to have Barbie™ (my mother abhorred them) or wear makeup.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

This is what I came up with the worked for me – Charlie has a twin who is the macho boy extreme! Charlie loved dressing up in dresses and heels. His twin loved dressing up in his fireman outfit. Would I allow his twin (or any of my other boys) to wear the fireman outfit to a function, to grandma's church, to the store? No. So I set the general rule - At home, with family, friends, to the zoo or park or whatever you may wear what you want. However to go to the store, the library, church, school and so on - you will dress according to the dress standards set for that environment. This is usually shorts, jeans or slacks. I'm extremely fortunate that Charlie never pushed the issue. He seemed to know what I was saying. Charlie would take off his dress and his twin would take off his army fatigues whenever I'd say we had to dress appropriately. Yes, I'm very fortunate!

Mother of a 9 year-old boy

The message from the group which I held uppermost in my mind during the visit to the toy store was "what would you have done if a 6-year-old daughter had requested

it?” It would have been a fine toy for her, so why not for him.... I am trying to make decisions about what is reasonable based on whether it's age appropriate rather than male/female appropriate...

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

We were wrong to throw out a Little Mermaid™™ movie and a Barbie™ in our ambivalence. It was misguided and he grieved their disappearance.

Mother of a 14 year-old boy

But my question is: how far do I push when he seems to steer away from the given choices? I mean, everyone's tastes evolve, so how do I let my son know that his choices are fine but not make him feel “locked into” any particular pattern? My fear is that I will somehow make him feel like I've labeled him; I want him to know that if he does truly experience changing tastes, that that's OK.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

My Own Baggage

I was afraid that my acceptance of the girl dress-up would REALLY make my worst fear come true: that my son would be gay or transgender. Now I know I do not hold the power to PRESTO! Make Kevin be anything. The only power I have is to show him I love him and accept him. I want him to be happy and I want to help him in any way I can.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

I've thought about it and I've realized that it's me. I have a problem coming to terms with this whole issue. I fear that if I allow him to hang the Bratz™ poster, who knows what will be next... Their rooms should be a place where they can truly express themselves. It's just hard taking that step.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

What I am striving for is to accept my son as whatever he wants to be – not as what I want him to be... It's so hard. There's a part of me that wants him to conform so that he fits in and won't get picked on... I still deal with “what will people think?”...I realize that is one thing for behavior we have the ability to change. It's a whole other thing for our inborn sense of self. I think we all feel the same way- that it is an interesting adventure to raise our GV children. It seems like there is never a dull moment in the day. I think it's a task that makes many of us overwhelmed and also a task that we never thought that we would have to deal with. It's also difficult because there is no clear-cut right or wrong solutions, or easy way to know what to do/say in many of the situations that we are forced into. Although this adventure is tough and confusing for us, I really feel that being put into this type of family composition has really taught my husband and I a lot about ourselves and a lot about the rest of the world. I myself can say (with ignorance and embarrassment) that prior to going through this myself, I had a narrow mind about many of these issues. I have learned virtues, first-hand, of acceptance and understanding and compassion. You said it nicely when you said that it is an interesting adventure. It sure is... but it has taught our entire family, our friends, and each other, many valuable lessons

Mother of a 9 year-old boy

Other People

I found that if I said with confidence, "He has a wide range of interests, and he loves many typically girl things. We feel that it is important to express all of who he is. We love and support him unconditionally." Period. No excuses, no apologies for who our child is, for who we are as parents. My experience is ... that if I came across with certainty about our parenting choices, I didn't give the opportunity to add shame into the mix."

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

My best advice is take care of you first. Others will be influenced by your level of comfort about the situation. If you communicate that it is all okay, people will react and act that way as well.

Mother of a 12 year-old boy

My main struggle at this time is dealing with my husband who doesn't want girl stuff in the house. My husband basically feels that if we don't encourage Adam, the "problem" will go away."

Mother of a 4 year-old boy

4. My Goals

More Knowledge = More Power

It is a process, and every parent and family goes through it on their own terms, at their own pace. We still felt uncomfortable when he wants to wear very feminine clothing outside the house. We don't know how to reach the balance between allowing him to express himself and protecting him from unwanted attention or negative comments, but every day gets a little easier.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

Do I lead my child into what our society considers gender appropriate behavior - or - do I embrace my child and face the world? Once I made the decision to embrace my son I plunged right in. I had to educate our neighbors and family. Then came school. I researched the school dress code. I was insistent that as long as my son abided by the school dress code then he was not to be bullied or teased for his choice of clothing colors. The person doing the bullying or teasing is the person in the wrong - not my son!

I had to educate and be very firm with the school, teachers, and peers. I learn with each encounter I have. My son learns, and others learn. It never stops.

Mother of a 9 year-old boy

Celebrating And Supporting My Child

I love and celebrate who Brook is: delightful, colorful, creative, magical, complex, gifted with a great mind, courageous spirit, big heart, a provocateur, a trickster, a teacher, a seven year old with a wiggly tooth and a goofy grin....Without all of our children, the world would be a much more drab place.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

I brag.. "Isn't awesome how he can create , dance, ice skate , design and not afraid to go with it" My son will go to school with a hair-band ,bracelets, jeans and a graphic t-shirt and not give a damn. It took 10 years of building up his self esteem and letting him know we love him unconditionally. Your kids know when you are embarrassed of them. Just do your best to put your chin up and be proud. You will get to a point where you will have to separate yourself from family and friends because they can't handle it. We can educate some and others won't budge on their beliefs. We don't want to have those in our lives.

Mother of a 9 year-old boy

Parenting For Success

What I'm trying to say is that it is O.K. for you to feel overwhelmed,.... It is O.K to set some limits on your child's gender expression to a level that you feel comfortable with. You are not hurting him because you are not doing all at once. It may be more harmful for him to see your ambivalence.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy.

did notice that when we allowed Sebastian to dress up whenever he wanted and had access to dresses, jewelry, high heeled shoes, dolls, girl toys, etc. his behavior changed tremendously. Before, he was not the easiest child, he would be testing limits constantly, teasing his siblings, easily hurt, clingy, and sometimes explosive. He made a significant turn, he became happier, more loving, very tender and caring with his little sister, and interestingly, better friend with his twin brother. It is like before he wanted to fight for his right to be who he is, he couldn't put it in words, and obviously, he was acting out.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I can speak only for my child, I don't know if it has been the same for other families in this group, but when my son realized that we accept him fully, it brought peace, and contentment, and I would dare to say happiness.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I know that for me the first step was overcoming my own embarrassment at my child's behaviors or choice of clothing. I suppose under the guise of trying to protect my child, I gave warnings that there maybe ridicule or teasing by other children if my child wore this or that. I think that I took away my child's power and taught my child that in order to fit in my child must conform. Looking back I see that a lot of it was an excuse for me to feel more comfortable, not my child.

Mother of a 8year-old boy

I think the words that really hit home were to focus on helping him with his internal drama, not focusing on my own internal drama. I do think that unconditional love and support are the key to raising a healthy, well adjusted child. Hope I can keep that ever present as we make this journey.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

We were concerned that by being too permissive on his behavior we were somehow preventing him from "learning how to be a boy." The turning point for us was when he drew a picture of himself as a pretty girl with bows on his long hair and a happy smile standing by my side with his little sister, the 3 of us very happy, sunny sky, smiling sun; on the opposite side he drew a picture of his dad, straight face, and his twin brother. He did not include either himself, his sister or myself. The sky had clouds and was raining.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

Dads Speak Out

Parents need to stop acting based on their own internal feelings and embarrassment. Again, this isn't about you. As with all children, your child needs to be nurtured and provided the tools to deal with adulthood....When you accept the responsibility to bring a child into the world, you accept the responsibility of raising them and providing a platform from which to become adults.

Father of a 5 year-old boy

Accept reality...in fact embrace it... we either learn to embrace our girly boys and love them for who they are or risk the likelihood of alienating them, and making them and us miserable for years to come along the way. Our special kids are likely to face years of hardship in schools and in society in general. They need us to be their islands of protection, understanding and support...Understanding has not happened overnight, for me it has been a gradual process, but I'm glad I chose to accept my son for who he is, rather than insist on making him into something I thought he should be.

Father of a 5 year-old boy

A Letter From A Dad To A Friend

...I challenge you to consider for a moment how old you were when you "decided" that you were a boy and would wear boy clothing and play with airplanes and other "boy" toys? You probably don't remember making such a decision at all, it just came naturally for you, didn't it? And did anyone question you? Did they sit you down and say, "Are you sure you're a boy?" Probably not. It wasn't so much a choice you had to make, as an innate intelligence, placed within by God. Neil has not made that choice either. As mentioned in our previous email, Neil has identified with, and played in the manner of a girl since the day we brought him home from the Philippines. It didn't matter what the toys were, or the setting, he would manage to turn play into something girlish. Having been raised in an extremely conservative Christian/Catholic household, I spent the large part of 5 years scolding, suppressing, and harassing Neil to "play and act like a boy". We sought outside assistance from various sources as well. In the meantime Neil was always extremely anxious and asthma-ridden with a very low self-

esteem - until now. Why do you question that? God did not intend for him to live with anxiety, fear, chronic sickness, and gasping for air. God intended for him to live authentically, without shame, and to breathe the beautiful fresh air that He provides us. We have not taken this path lightly, or without much prayer and "soul-searching". Just because this may seem the easy way out, or like something that the "liberal media" has tricked us into believing is "mainstream", that couldn't be farther from the truth. As parents, we face large amounts of scrutiny from many others who don't understand, and seek to judge us every day. This is not a liberal or conservative thing, or a political statement in any way. Neil faces scrutiny daily from others, yet despite that, is happier and more sure of who he is than most kids twice the age. THAT is what is most important to us at this time. In our shoes, would you want any less for Alex?

Bottom line is that you really do not know what it is like unless you are wearing our shoes, Andy. You can disagree with us and be rock solid in your faith, and I admire that. But if you want to quote the Bible, I'm sure you're familiar with Judge Not, Lest You be Judged...

I appreciate your prayers, and pray that you never face any decisions when it comes to your family, which may go against the grain of your faith. It is not as easy as it may seem or look. Life is not always black and white.....

Father of a 7 year-old boy

Good Answers Go a Long Way

I stopped saying my son likes girl things. I say, my son likes pretty things, or bright colors, or quiet activities, or he has a vivid imagination, or he really enjoys music and dancing...you get the idea, because as we have learned, boys and girls like this kind of things.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

When a child asked James why he wears pink he says "because I can."

Mother of an 9 year-old boy

5. The Outreach Program

The Parent List-serve

Thanks for sharing how you are feeling. It is nice to know that what I feel at times is not something that is unique.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

I read the posts everyday and I have gained so much insight from all of you.

Mother of a 7 year-old boy

I imagine many of you understand that deep love you feel for your child, the wish for them to be completely happy with themselves, and the sadness that sometimes comes when you acknowledge that such a feeling is presently elusive for them. You are the only group of parents I know who might understand the pain, and the wish to have

Santa magically fix everything.
Mother of a 6 year-old boy

Living here in Chicago without the benefit of the support group I have been amazed at just how powerful this list serve has been. It is validating to hear so many people with the same experiences, and to learn from other strong parents who are so willing to support their kids.

Mother of an 8 year-old boy

I am also grateful for this support network, as we are so far away to attend the group meetings, and while I have supportive family and friends it is just too difficult to explain my feelings as they can not totally appreciate the whole situation. So, it is nice to have this supportive outlet of those who have been there done that, and are new to this. Again my thanks to all of you.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I am truly thankful for this list and have learned so much already from those of you who have walked down this path for a much longer time. My question is: How do you find that balance between showing acceptance for who they are and encouraging their true feelings in the face of societal displeasure, but not also "labeling" them for a lifetime?

Mother of a 5 year-old boy.

Thanks again to all the moms and dads who understand the tremendous struggle, who love their children most of all, and who put their children's happiness ahead of conformity, or stares, and of discomfort that we may feel in the process.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I'm not sure if the impact of the list serve can be quantified. The opportunity to connect with other families who "get it" helps bridge the sense of isolation I sometimes experience parenting my son. Just reading so many of the positive upbeat stories is enough to put a smile on my face when I'm down. Thank you both for your commitment to our families!

Mother of a 13 year-old boy

Let me share that having found your Parents Guide and the listserv has been a turning point in my life and the way I am approaching raising our kids. Furthermore, we shared The Guide with our parents and it has provided us with a framework and language to engage in a much needed conversation.

Mother of a 5 year-old boy

I am having good days and bad days. The good days are usually the days after I get charged up from reading your emails on this list. I feel armed and ready to take anything that is dished out to me from other parents, neighbors, family members, etc. But then one little thing happens and I feel completely burned out...

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

The parents on this list have helped us overcome our own issues with our son's gender variance and been wonderful coaches on how to pave his way through school and

other avenues. After all, it is us, the grown-ups who are really the immature ones and have the "problem"; while our children are the educators.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

THANK GOD for this list serve. The fact that I can actually talk to someone who is going through the same thing feels surreal.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

I think it helped when I kept assuring him that there are other boys like him, and even if he didn't know any at 6,8 or 10, someday he would meet them.

Mother of a 14 year-old boy

Reading these makes me think about the remarkable, even somewhat eerie, resemblance in interests and predilections between our sons."

Father of a 5 year-old boy

It is nice to receive so much support. It is also extremely helpful to know that the feelings I have are not unique to me and that I am not alone in this process.

Mother of a 6 year-old boy

The Support Groups

We've told him since he was very small that someday he'd meet other boys with his interests, that he is definitely not alone, and he has believed us. We were very happy to make this statement "come true" at the group meeting.

Mother of a 8 year-old boy

On the way home after tonight's meeting I asked the kids what the evening had been like for them... "we had all our stuff in common. I didn't have to hide anything... Well, sort of like having been in a cage and then be set free..."

Mother of a boys, 12 and 10 years of age