

How People can help instead of harm Transgender Women

Opinion by Sondra Wilson, ISU Student. 9/15/24

For many adult transgender women, simply blending in is the goal. Despite popular perception, we are not all trying to be social media icons. Although I can be found all over the internet, in many ways it has been a cry for help, and not knowing about or understanding proper channels for which to achieve my goals.

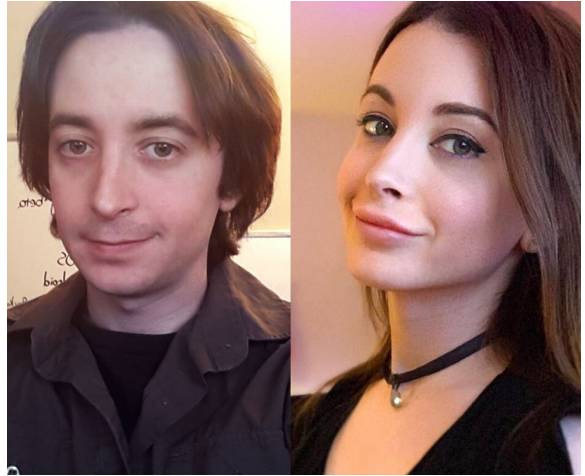
I hope this handout can help advocate for other transgender people who have had a difficult time talking about this sensitive topic due to feelings of shame that, for many of us, were put into us by others over a period of many years. I believe it is difficult to talk about because many Iowans, like myself, were raised in a religion which teaches that being transgender (or gay, bi) is sinful and therefore shameful. As I've gotten older, I've come to realize how abusive and wrong it is to put that kind of guilt and shame into the hearts and minds of a young people coming to terms with their sexuality. They need real guidance, and to know that they are not alone.

In case anyone is interested in my beliefs, I personally believe that The Creator never called homosexuality an abomination, but rather humans *wrote* that God said that, and stoned to death (murdered) anyone who didn't obey. That was thousands of years ago (even though it still happens in places around the world). It appears that generations before us, up until our parents or grandparents, have suffered from a case of "abused becomes the abuser" with regard to our sentiment

toward LGBT+ people. I believe God loves us and wants us to succeed, be happy, and help others. We should strive toward each others' both mutual and individual happiness.

Although the following popular self-help message is intended to be helpful and encouraging, "You're beautiful. You don't need surgery. You just need to learn to accept yourself the way that you are," it can feel very hurtful because (for trans women) it feels like our needs aren't being heard or taken seriously, and that our suffering isn't being recognized or cared about. When I attend an event with regard to supporting transgender people, there is some amount of hurt and concern when there is no mention of aid for surgery, because that is what most of this is about for many of us. If we could blend and live a somewhat happy minus the severe dysphoria, we would. I am tired of both feeling uncomfortable and making others feel uncomfortable.

The photos above are a couple examples of the results of Facial Feminization Surgery, with these particular images being accredited to the phenomenal work of Dr. Toby Mayer.¹ This is who I would like to get surgery from if I could afford (\$35K). Unfortunately, however, I have not found any scholarships which help pay for this type of surgery. Although there are some charitable funds which provide surgery for a few people a year via working somewhat like a lottery, it gets exhausting filling out applications over and over only to have them rejected year after year. It feels offensive – like something out of Hunger Games – the way that healthcare for trans people is being run – like a game show – when we have the technological solutions available to cause healing. What's the point in researching to cure diseases if we're unwilling to administer to those who are urgently in need? In the race to survival, having time to fill out applications which ultimately don't provide guaranteed returns feels eventually feels like a waste of time – especially when you're constantly exhausted from living in survival mode.



Jordan



Bray

¹ Dr. Toby Mayer's Patient Gallery: <https://www.drtobymayer.com/ffsgallery>

It has become common culture in professional and progressive parts of Iowa to wear gender pronoun pins, used to identify whether someone goes by He/Him, She/Her, They/Them, or another pronoun(s). While I love that this helps support others in the transgender community, and that it is well-intentioned, it mistakenly misses the mark with regard to what the vast majority of transgender people need most: access to surgery.

Following decades of suffering, personal inflection, and prayer, I believe Facial Feminization Surgery ought undoubtedly be considered “necessary” and not merely “cosmetic” by medical professionals, the general public, and any and all insurance companies. By virtue I believe transgender surgeries as well as many other surgeries currently classified as “cosmetic” ought be considered “necessary” in order to improve mental and emotional health.

I ask one more thing: when you meet a transgender woman, please do not misgender her to her face, to your friends, or in your heart. Many of us are silently suffering, can't afford the solution, and quietly request compassion and wisdom from our peers. If we could blend in, we would. I wish I felt attractive instead of awkward and always sticking out like a sore thumb.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Feel free to reach out to me at Sondra@iastate.edu to request an in-class discussion. I am open to any respectful question: from stories of trauma to religious views to the modern miracle of vaginoplasty, which I received in Iowa City in May 2023.

We are all adults. It is time we have an adult conversation.

The Parable of Two Men and Their Horses

Two men each had a horse that was sick, but they needed to get up the mountain to secure their cabins before the winter storm.

Donald did not want to wait until his horse got well. That would take too long!
Instead he decided to ride his sick horse up the mountain.

The other man, Gandalf, decided to care for his horse until it got well before heading up the mountain.
“That's going to take forever! You're an idiot!” scoffed Donald, as he left camp and headed up the base of the mountain.

Two days later, Gandalf's horse was neighing in delight and prancing around. Knowing that she feeling better and wanted to ride, Gandalf put his packs on the horse and rode up the mountain.

About halfway up they saw Donald crying and looking down at his poor horse, which lain collapsed on the ground, exhausted and shivering.

“You ought to have formed a more solid plan.” said Gandalf.

“I had a concept of a plan!” said Donald assuredly.

Unfortunately, a *concept* of a plan wasn't enough.

Moral of the Story:

Many say, “Work hard and save up, then you can afford surgery,” however feeling completely overwhelmed by the sheer cost of a surgery is extremely daunting, especially while suffering because you can't afford surgery. If we want happy, hard-working Iowans, we should prioritize healing them first so that they do not collapse halfway up the mountain.

I am running for Iowa Governor in 2026. You can read my healthcare proposal on www.WildWillpower.org. I would like to read your earnest, constructive, solution oriented feedback at SondraWilson4Governor@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing your ideas.