

How families can help adult children who identify as transgender

By Pamela Garfield-Jaeger, licensed therapist (LCSW)

Author of *A Practical Response to Gender Distress Tips and Tools for Families and Froggy Girl*

About me:

- I'm a licensed therapist since 2005
- I worked in inpatient and outpatient mental health programs
- I was a school counselor and supervisor for other school counselors
- My primary focus was on teens, young adults and families
- I've had to leave-full time work because of a physical disability, but that has freed me up to speak up, help families, and train other likeminded therapists



Don't lose hope

- You never know what the future will bring
- It is never too late (detransitioners taught me that)
- Your love matters –A LOT!

It's not about gender

- Gender distress is a symptom of something else.
- No one is born in the wrong body.
- Think about what the underlying issues are for your loved one. Then think about how you would communicate or address them, based on the underlying causes, and not gender.

Examples of underlying influences gender distress (usually it is a combination):

- Family struggles, loss, family conflict, divorce, etc.
- Autism
- Sexual Trauma
- Health struggles (like chronic pain, a disability or endometriosis)
- Over-exposure or too early exposure to porn or graphic sexual content
- Social isolation, social struggles, feeling invisible
- Overmedicalization (SSRI's), over-labeling (too many diagnoses)
- Failure to launch/avoidance/fear of growing up
- Unfettered access to the internet too young
- Immersion in social justice ideas such needing to be a “victim” & avoiding being a “white supremacist”

Ways to connect:

- Do more listening than lecturing. You don't need to agree or affirm, just listen and stay curious. Listen for the underlying themes and connect on that, rather than argue about gender or pronouns.
- Connect on other subjects and interests. Music? Art? Sports?
- Do activities together, ideally something physical so they can become more embodied, something away from a screen.

Apologize (if appropriate)

- Be honest with yourself and express and what you may have been responsible for.
- Acknowledge genuine hurts your loved one experienced.

Did you need to pay attention more to a special needs sibling and neglect the other child? Were you heavily distracted during your divorce? Were you struggling with a mental health issue when your child was younger? Did you allow your child unlimited access to the internet and not pay attention to the fallout? Did someone hurt your child, and you wished you could have protected him/her?

Developmental Age

- Consider the developmental age of the person you are talking to. You may be talking to a chronological adult who is developmentally still a teenager.
- Often a trans identity stunts social-emotional development further because of the obsessive nature of it, the young adult does not face other normal maturing experiences. (This happens with addiction too)

Adjust your communication style accordingly.

Financial support

- Are you funding the transition or the lifestyle that allows a transition?
- Consider if you gave less financial support, would your adult child be able to continue obsessing about gender?
- Think about how you may want to set limits financially and set a plan.

Bring in reinforcement

- Think about other trusted adults you can bring into the mix like a cousin, aunt, grandma, or a family friend.
- Ideally, someone your loved one already has a relationship with is best.
- Bringing in detransitioners has not been successful for most families, unless the person is already questioning.

Ultimately, they will need to make their own choices

- A person who is deep in trans ideology has many similarities to someone who has an addiction. Ultimately, they will be the one to get “sober”. You just need to set the right conditions so your loved one knows he/she can come to you at any time.
- What would you do if he/she had an addiction and you can't lock them up and they aren't choosing treatment?

Believe in yourself

- Stay steady and stay strong in your beliefs. Your adult child needs your strength and leadership.
- Remember that you aren't a hateful "phobic" person.
- Also remember that truth is not hate. In fact, lying or "affirmation" is the easier path. Give yourself credit for taking the more difficult, but correct path.
- Trust yourself and trust your instincts. You know your child, your family and yourself better than anyone else.
- Be kind to yourself and get help and support for yourself if needed.

Finding a good therapist

- www.conservativecounselors.com
- <https://www.opentherapyinstitute.org/>

<https://pamthetruthfultherapist.substack.com/p/what-makes-a-good-therapist-17f>

What Makes a Good Therapist?

How to screen for a skillful child/teen therapist who is not captured by radical ideas



PAMELA GARFIELD-JAEGER

JUL 31, 2025



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An Open Letter to Parents from The Truthful Therapist:

Believe in yourself, because you have it in you



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MAY 17, 2024



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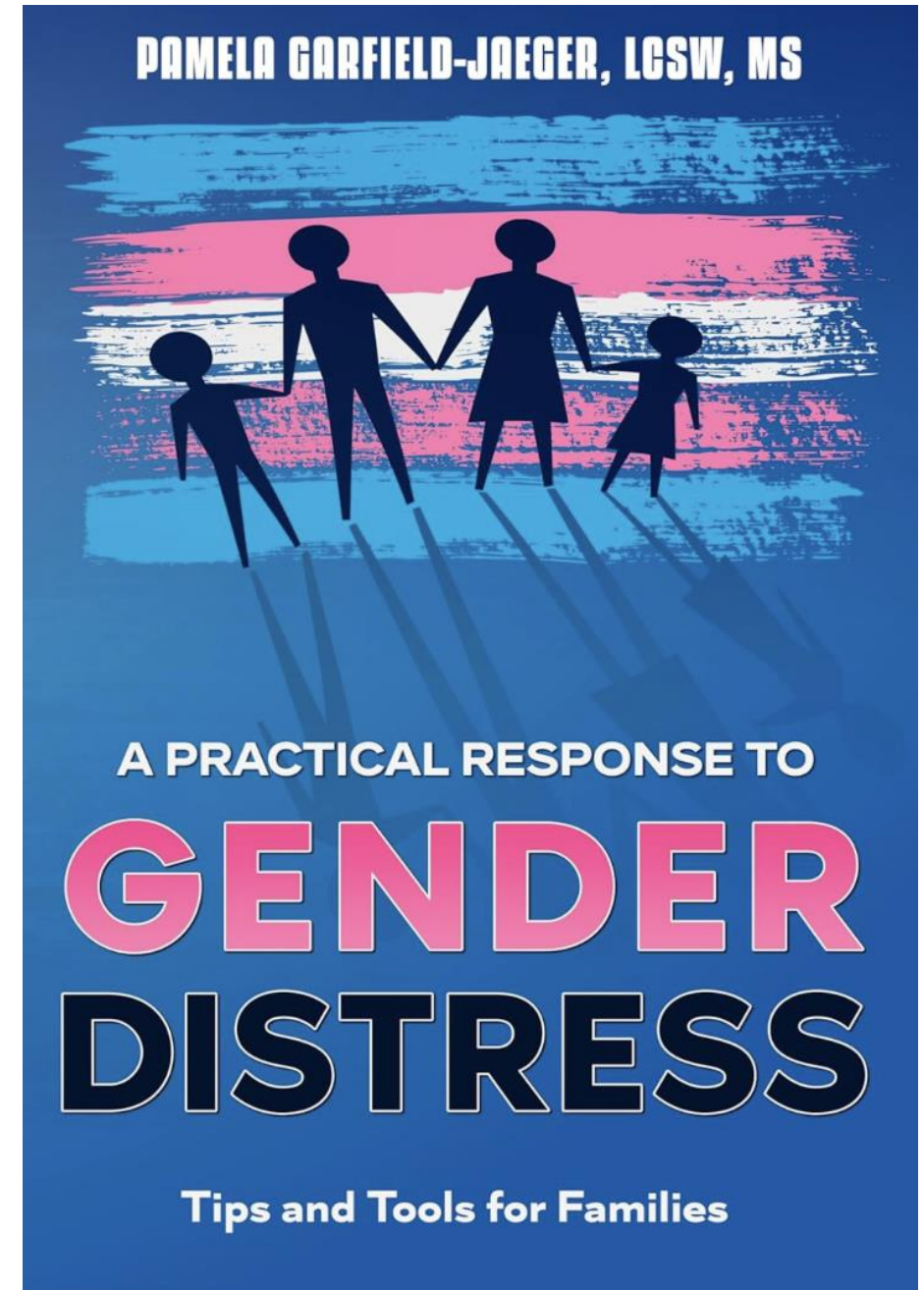


<https://pamthetruthfultherapist.substack.com/p/a-open-letter-to-parents-from-the>

A PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO GENDER DISTRESS

- Detailed list of influences and underlying causes of gender distress.
- A breakdown of all the major lies the trans activists repeat, including the suicide lie.
- How therapists are trained to manipulate parents. (I attended a class and wrote it up for a chapter)
- Questions to start an open-ended conversation with a trans-identified person.
- How to screen for an appropriate therapist
- A “Trans/English” dictionary.
- Powerful art and quotes by detransitioners.
- A comprehensive list of resources.

<https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Response-Gender-Distress-Families/dp/B0CXMRGMBV>



<https://www.amazon.com/Desist-Detrans-Detox-Getting-Gender/dp/B0F4V6SZFL>



Froggy Girl-A children's book about self acceptance.

www.froggygirlbook.com

- Written by me-a licensed therapist, and illustrated by Nicolas Blooms, a detransitioner

