

How Do I Know if I'm Trans?

To be taught in parallel with S1E2 of the *This is Probably a Really Weird Question* podcast.

Intended Audience

This educational module is intended for use at an undergraduate level. Students are anticipated to have majors in nursing, pre-medical studies, biological sciences, and other health-related fields. Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to help prepare students for a future career in healthcare, with an emphasis on provider-patient relationships and discussing gender identity and gender-affirming care.

Required Materials

Season 1, Episode 2 of *This is Probably a Really Weird Question* podcast

<https://www.reallyweirdquestion.com/episodes>

"New Study from The Fenway Institute, MGH Shows Discrimination, Stigma, and Family Pressure Drive Detransition Among Transgender People." *Legal Monitor Worldwide*, April 8, 2021.

https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&u=udel_main&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA657748678&inPS=true&linkSource=interlink&sid=bookmark-ITOF

Vincent, Ben. "A Strong Motivation to Tick the Boxes: Non-Binary Perceptions and Experiences of Gender Identity Clinics." In *Non-Binary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities, and Healthcare*, 1st ed., 169–96. Bristol University Press, 2020.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv138wrbg.12>

Anticipated Misconceptions to Address

- *Transitioning one's gender always involves medical processes to alter primary and secondary sex characteristics.* For transgender individuals, transitioning can involve a social transition, a medical transition, or neither. Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria related to their physical appearance, nor do all trans people desire a prescription for hormone blockers, gender-affirming hormones, or surgery. The term to describe this misconception—that trans identity is contingent on physical dysphoria and a medical transition—is “transmedicalism.” To learn more about the history and effects of transmedicalism, please reference this resource: ["The Trap of Transmedicalization," University of Colorado Boulder.](#)

- *Trans and nonbinary genders are a recent societal invention and have no basis in history.* People who we would today describe as transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary have existed for centuries. Early European arrivals in North America noted that most of the Indigenous peoples they encountered included individuals who lived as a different gender than what they were assigned at birth or who embodied two genders. Today, many Native American nations recognize two-spirit persons as distinct from male and female genders. To learn more about two-spirit and the experiences of two-spirit people in contemporary America, please reference this resource: [“Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ Identities: Today and Centuries Ago.”](#) Another early example of a publicly gender-nonconforming person is the Public Universal Friend, who was a spiritual leader in the late-18th century. They are discussed in more detail in the podcast episode.
- *Many young transgender people will detransition later in life due to personal regret.* In reality, while one study from The Fenway Institute and Massachusetts General Hospital found that [about 13%](#) of trans people have reported detransitioning in their lifetime, nearly 90% of those people reported that they did so as a response to social stigma against transgender people, unsupportive families and schools, and increased vulnerability to violence. In fact, researchers from those same institutions (Fenway and MGH) and from Stanford found [that social transition during childhood and adolescence](#) significantly improved mental health outcomes. Bullying, not transition, the researchers found, caused enduring harm.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

At the start of class, take some time to assess students’ prior knowledge about the subject of trans identity. Students may have personal experiences or knowledge about the trans community that can guide future discussions, if they are comfortable. Avoid the assumption that all students in the class are cisgender when facilitating instruction to prevent alienating any closeted or questioning students who may be participating in discussion.

Class Discussion

Next, students will be given an opportunity to discuss the prerequisite reading assignments and podcast episode with their classmates. Some discussion questions may include:

- For a patient who is questioning whether or not they identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, what might be some of the social, medical, or other factors they might be considering? This question asks the student to put themselves in the mindset of the questioning patient and think about various aspects of gender identity.

- What are some strategies people can use to affirm their gender and/or live authentically (i.e. through social and/or medical transitioning)?
- How might you, as a clinician, address questions from a patient about their gender identity or gender nonconformity?
 - Would these strategies differ depending on the gender of the patient? If they were a binary or nonbinary trans person?
- What obstacles do transgender people face when seeking gender-affirming care?
- What did you learn from the readings (what was new to you)? Did anything surprise you?

If students become interested in a certain discussion topic, encourage them to pursue it further; these questions are presented as a guideline for class discussion but can be adapted to fit specific classes.

Interactive Activity

For this activity, students will be directed to the [Museum of Transology](#) online collections. The Museum of Transology is a United Kingdom-based project that aims to document the lives of transgender community members for public education purposes. Most items in the collection were donated along with a brown swing tag, on which is written the personal significance of the object to the donor. According to the Museum's website, "This means both the story and the object are archived as two parts of a whole, never to be erased or overwritten. This is a deliberate strategy to ensure the experiences surrounding trans, non-binary, and intersex people's everyday lives are recorded in our own words, forever."

Each student will choose two objects from the museum's collections to analyze and discuss with the class. Encourage students to choose objects from two different sections of the collection to broaden the scope of discussion. For each object, they should consider the following questions:

- What was the significance of this object to the person who donated it?
 - What does the object reveal about the donor's experience as a transgender person?
- How is this object related to gender-affirming care?
- What patterns do you notice about the objects in this collection? Are there any similarities? Differences?
- Were there any objects you were surprised to see in the collection? Why or why not?

Additional Resources:

- Dara Hoffman Fox (LPC and Gender Therapist) <https://darahoffmanfox.com/>

- Meystre-Agustoni, G. Talking about sexuality with the physician: are patients receiving what they wish? *Swiss Med Wkly.* 2011;141:w13178
- 2015 US Trans Survey reports: <https://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports>
- 2022 US Trans Survey: <https://www.ustranssurvey.org/>
- Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (University of California Press, 2011)
- Scott Larson, "'Indescribable Being': Theological Performances of Genderlessness in the Society of the Publick Universal Friend, 1776–1819." *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 3 (2014): 576–600. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2014.0020>.
- Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History* (Cambridge, 2020)
- Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2002)
- Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (NYU Press, 2017)
- Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (Basic Books, 2017)
- "Beyond Gender: Indigenous Perspectives, Muxe," Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. <https://nhm.org/stories/beyond-gender-indigenous-perspectives-muxe>.