

5 Ways to Manage Gender Dysphoria

A Resource by
Transformers and
Allsorts Young
People and Staff.

Gender Dysphoria

Gender Dysphoria is the term used to describe the discomfort that transgender people feel in relation to their gender identity and the sex which they were assigned at birth. The NHS website describes it as this:

'Gender dysphoria is a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity.'

As a trans person, feelings of dysphoria can be extremely distressing and uncomfortable and can have a severe impact on

mental health. Dysphoric feelings can lead to anxiety, stress and depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. They can also contribute to eating disorders and poor self-care habits such as substance misuse, and irregular sleep patterns.

And of course it's not uncommon for people who aren't trans to feel uncomfortable with their bodies, but gender dysphoria is central to the experience of being transgender.

Most of you will experience dysphoria in some way or other and to greater or lesser extents during your life. The feeling can be quite hard to pin down and describe, however, gender dysphoria can generally be separated into two different types.



Social Dysphoria

Where an individual feels uncomfortable in the social role in which they find themselves. Perhaps people use the wrong name when addressing you. Maybe you are mis-pronounced. You might feel obliged or pressured to conform to certain gendered expectations based on your sex assigned at birth.

PTO →

Physical Dysphoria

Where an individual feels a pronounced discomfort with or disconnect between their sense of gender and their sex assigned at birth. It can manifest in many different ways. Maybe you feel discomfort about your body shape and height. The presence or lack of body or facial hair, your voice and physical characteristics such as the shape of your face or width of shoulders or hips etc.

Maybe you can't even pin this feeling down to any particular things. You might just feel out of place or wrong and uncomfortable in yourself. Some days you may not feel dysphoric at all and other days you might feel it a lot.

And of course, social and physical dysphoria often entwine and mix with one another and it can become hard to tell which is which.

Ok so you get it. **Dysphoria is rubbish**, but it need not be the master of you. In this Zine we aim to give you some practical, impractical and occasionally downright silly and fanciful tips to help you to manage dysphoria.

So where to start?

Where?

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that there are **five simple steps** you can take to boost your mood and help you feel happier and more positive. The NHS refers to these steps as **'The Five Ways to Wellbeing'**

And it is those five steps on which we will be basing our own 'Five Steps to Managing Gender Dysphoria'.

1. Connect...

...With people around you. Talk to people who respect your names/ pronouns, talk to other trans people in real life and online. Watch trans Youtubers. Look for youth groups in your area. Find online spaces which feel safe. Practice connecting to people.

Advocate for trans rights/ awareness, but remember self-care. Maybe a break from social media might be a good idea for a while.

2. Be Active

You don't have to go for a run. You can start small... Get out of bed (even if you get up late!). Look after your body with a wash. Shave if you want to. Don't if you don't... Have a shower. If your body is making you feel gross, then maybe a bubble bath. You can hide under the bubbles. Or just don't look in the mirror. You may have complicated feelings towards your body, but it is yours and it deserves some care.

You don't have to be physical to be active. You can read, watch TV or draw, join a club. Rediscover a hobby. Remember things that you used to do which you haven't done for a while!

Maybe do go for a run or ride a bike or a skateboard. If being in a public gym or changing room makes you feel icky then walk round the block. You can wear baggy clothes or put your hood up.

Focus on body positivity rather than body parts which create dysphoria. Realise what your triggers are and learn how to work around them. Educate others and try to practice mindfulness/self-care.

3. Take Notice

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whenever you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friend. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

If you are going through medical transition you might notice changes in your body. Its ok to celebrate the one's which make you feel good but remember that patience is key. It's called transition because it is a change and change takes time.

4. Keep Learning

Try something new. Be curious. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a new responsibility at work. Fix your bike or learn to play an instrument. Start a band or write a poem. Learn to cook your favourite food. Set yourself a challenge that you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun. Learn about trans history and find comfort in the words of those people who have gone before you. There is more wisdom and beauty in works of art, writing and music by trans people than there is in any TV documentary.

5. Give

Do something nice for your friends. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Give someone a compliment. Look outwards as well as inwards. Seeing yourself and your happiness as linked to your wider community can be really rewarding and creates connections with people around you. Be aware and have understanding of yourself and others.



alex's page

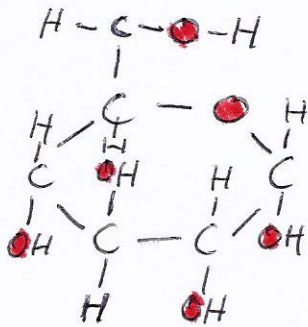


robish
hammer and
sickle

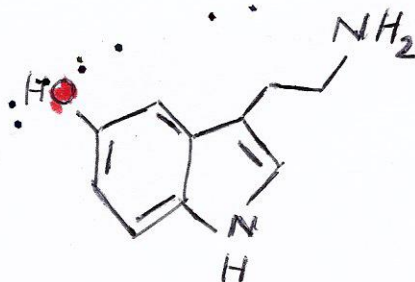


he/him

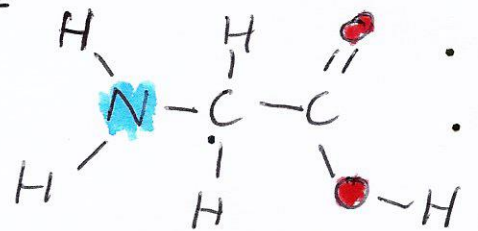
hey, i'm alex ☺ i'm a trans guy who identifies as queer (i mean i know i like girls, but guys are good too? and non-binary ppl are cool... who knows). i dislike capital letters and ~~capitalism~~, love playing guitar (i'm in a band called lavender town syndrome) and adopt an otter - the best animals (when they're young their fur is so dense they can't physically dive underwater). ~~at~~ the moment i'm experimenting with ambience and trying to learn how to do a black and red magic trick. i tend to deal with dysphoria by working out at the gym, punching things or having a shave. also like shouting or listening to very offensive music very loudly. sometimes i will focus on other things like making polymod sculptures of molecules i.e



alpha glucose
(sugar)



serotonin
(neurotransmitter)



glycine
(the most basic amino acid)

i'm in love with rachel riley so i also watch a lot of Countdown.

Sometimes it feels easier to look after your friends than yourself. This can be nice but remember remember self-care.

If you find yourself feeling dysphoric or if you know someone who is then perhaps you could try some of these self-care techniques suggested by the young people and staff at Transformers youth group.

1) Listen to music. Listening to your favourite songs can transport you to a calmer place. Perhaps you want to relax with some chilled out beats or maybe you want to turn it up real loud and rock out. Dance and throw your arms around, your body belongs to you and you can let music make you feel good.

2) Walking. Walking is the perfect accompaniment to music. There is a natural rhythm there which can be very calming. Perhaps you want to walk by the sea and feel the wind on your face or stare at the waves. Maybe you want to get a bus to the countryside and fill your lungs with fresh air.

3) Distraction. Find something to take your mind off your dysphoria. Write a journal or read a book. Refocus yourself. Do something active which you enjoy. Some people like to do cross words or number puzzles or paint and draw. Perhaps get a mindful colouring book.

4) Youtube. Is full of videos by inspiring and entertaining young trans people. Watch your favourite channel or search for more. It can be so nice to know that other people share your experiences and maybe even have some advice of their own for you.

5) Talk to people. That's right. Tell your friends that you feel bad. Ask them to look after you. They might not understand exactly how you feel but good allies will always try to make you feel safe and happy again.

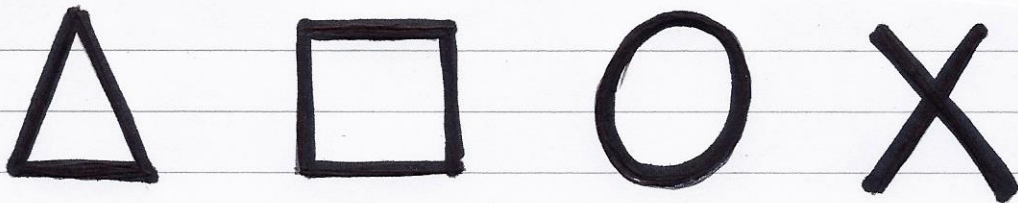
Hey, My name is Robyn



I'm a 24 year old

transgender woman living in the wonderful city of Brighton and Hove. I feel a lot of dysphoria around my bottom half and hope one day to get surgery to correct this.

I find it very hard to deal with and often will just shut down for a while but one thing I like to do is to focus on things I enjoy. I find playing and reviewing video games to be very refreshing as I can engage with something without being clouded by depression, anxiety and dysphoria.



I find things so foggy and hard to enjoy when my dysphoria is bad so focusing on these games where it's easy to be honest with both myself and anyone reading my content feels like a nice change of pace. I also like to focus on my appearance, changing up my hair colour every year and using plenty of make-up and clothing to create a style I feel at home in. This helps because although I often find myself feeling out of place in my body I can make my fashion my own. I might not be comfortable in my skin but I am in my clothing and for now that will have to do.

6) Pamper Yourself. Treat your body to a nice long hot bath or shower. Crack open the posh soap you've been saying for a special occasion. If you feel uncomfortable being naked in your own company then wear a swimming costume or put loads of bubbles in or close your eyes. Listen to music too!

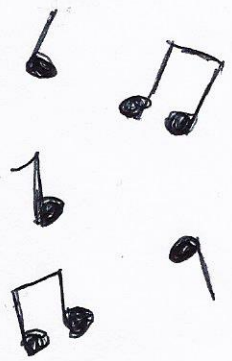
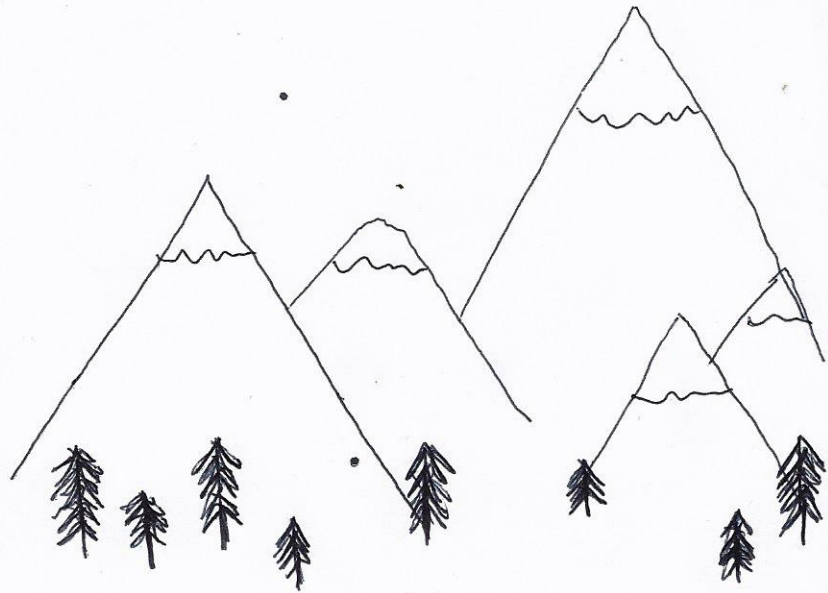
7) Treat Yourself. Go get a coffee or find a new top in a charity shop. You need not spend much. Or maybe don't spend any money. Go window shopping or find a free gallery or museum. Give yourself a treat because you deserve one.

8) Play With Animals. Perhaps you have a pet or know someone who does. You could walk a dog or maybe even just go to watch dogs play in the park. Animals will never judge you on your appearance and probably don't have much of a grasp of gender roles anyway! If you can't find any animals to play with then Youtube some cats!

9) Wear Your Favourite Clothes. In or out of the house. Pop that pretty dress on or get dapper. Close the curtains. Wear trackies and a massive tshirt. Get comfortable or experimental. Have fun with clothes or use them to get snugly. It's all good.

10) Fantasy Worlds. Escape to a special place. Play video games or read or play role play games. Watch cartoons. Surround yourself with your imagination and be somewhere else for a while. Watch comedy.

I am a drummer, snowboarder, beach enthusiast, vegan and transman. I love camping, live music and cats. I also have depression, anxiety, ADHD and am recovering from anorexia.



KATL
he/him

To manage my dysphonia and mental health I find it very helpful to be active. Snowboarding and doing sports helps me to concentrate on other things such as goals like landing a new trick or even my dream of going pro. Learning new things helps me ~~remember~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~ I can ~~do~~ things. I also find putting my feelings into writing, songs or playing music helps me to get my feelings out in a way that isn't self destructive.

11) Writing. You don't need to be the next Rowling or Sylvia Plath. You can write your feelings down just to let them out of your head and heart. Maybe if you feel sad you can write a sad poem and put it somewhere safe. Or go out into the garden and burn it!

12) Let yourself feel dysphoric. There's nothing wrong with just letting yourself be in the moment. Stay in bed all day if that's what you need to do. Close the curtains and switch your phone off. Cancel plans if you need to. You are in charge of looking after yourself and you can always try again tomorrow.

13) Be kind to yourself. Give yourself a break. It's ok to feel dysphoric. It's not nice, but it's ok and you will feel better eventually.

The most important thing is that you keep yourself feeling as safe as possible when you feel dysphoric. You will learn how to do this if you practice. And above all, remember that the way you feel is not your fault and you are absolutely not a lesser human in any way for being trans.

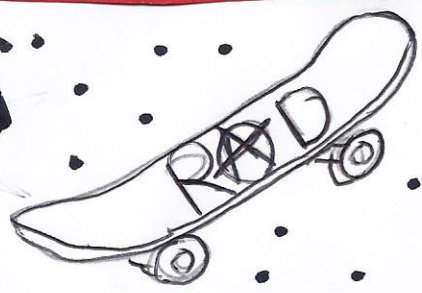
Space for your thoughts....

Maevve

I am a queer lesbian trans woman and a music nerd
I have gender dysphoria and I
have experience of depression, anxiety and stress.



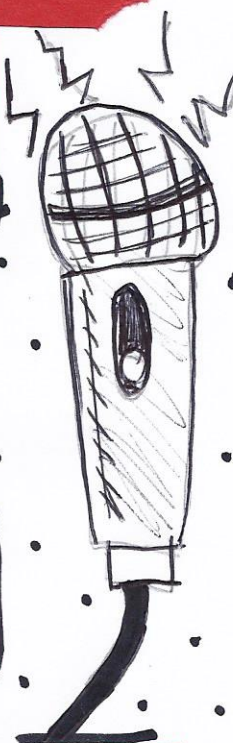
I feel dysphoric when I am hormonal
and particularly if I encounter transphobia in
the street or in the media.



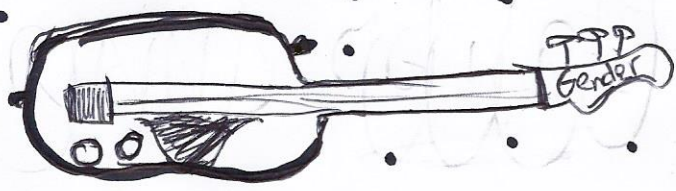
When I feel dysphoric my ideal thing to do is hide at home and play
skate 3 on the Xbox with a large mug of tea, a face pack and my toy
giraffe.



When it's not possible to hide
I like to channel my negative feelings into making
music.

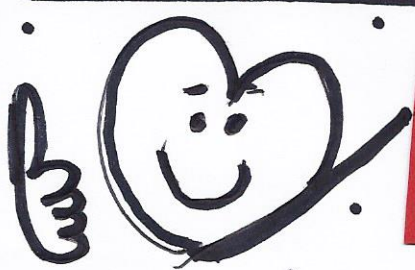


I play my guitar, the drums or grab a microphone and have a good
scream about what makes me angry. Being in bands has always helped
me feel like myself.



I like to get tattoos some times because
they feel like little flags staking claims in
taking back my body.

I am a vegan and I love to cook and sometimes my girlfriend and I look after our
mates dog. She's called BB and she is always happy to see you.

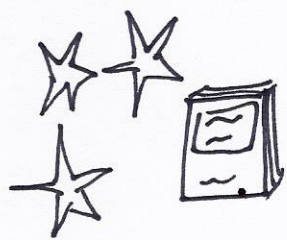


Dysphoria can feel very cruel
but my friends help me keep perspective
and remember who I am

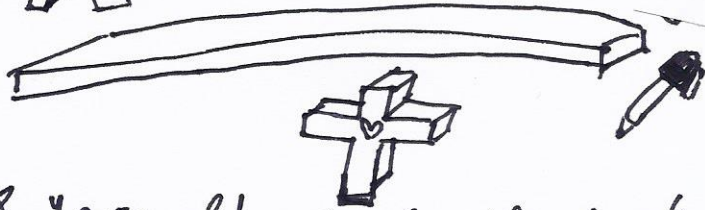


Write or draw something that helps you feel better when you're down...

Write or draw something that helps you feel better when you are anxious...



ATLAS



I'm atlas, 18 years old, animal enthusiast, poet, youth leader, Christian, transmasculine individual and asexual. I have autism, depression, social anxiety, and OCD. I have a diploma in animal management and am a published poet. I don't like mixing food or loud noises. Being active is something I try to do... it clears my mind and keeping busy keeps me away from falling into my depression and dysphoria. I love walking my dog Bandit and collecting resources for art projects, though sometimes doing anything is hard, especially if I think too much.

One of the most important parts of my life is connecting with others. I live with my church minister and his family, having been disowned by/escaped from my biological family, and my church friends and youth leaders are the closest and most supportive people in my life, who take efforts to understand my mental health, if not my gender identity, so I try to educate them and show them I am human just like them. I also help other LGBT youth in church and help at our youth group, it makes me get up on most days. I also go to trans youth group, which helps me feel accepted and more confident in myself.

I love channeling everything inside of me into creativity, my imagination lets me shape myself into the man/person I someday want to fully become.

How could the '5 ways' help you if you feel dysphoric? Write down your ideas.

1. Connect...

2. Be active...

3. Take Notice...

4. Keep Learning...

5. Give...

SUPPORT SERVICES

Allsorts Youth Project

Brighton based youth project providing a range of support services for LGBTU young people. Includes an over 16's drop-in; over 16's trans and gender question group (Transformers); under 16's group (TAG); under 11's trans and gender questioning group; support for parents of trans and gender questioning children and young people; 1-2-1 support and youth volunteering opportunities.

www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

Young People's Centre

Provide free counselling (both face-to-face and online) to young people between 13 and 25.

<http://youngpeoplescentre.org.uk/counselling>

Mindout LGBTQ Mental Health Project

Advice & information, advocacy, a peer support groups, wellbeing activities, peer mentoring service, and out of hours online chat.

www.mindout.org.uk

Right Here

Right Here Brighton and Hove is a project led by young people to promote the mental & emotional wellbeing of young people in Brighton and Hove through a range of free and low cost activities.

<http://right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk/>

ChildLine

Confidential service for children and young people under 19, where no problem is too big or too small.

www.childline.org.uk

Samaritans

Samaritans volunteers listen in confidence to anyone in any type of emotional distress, without judging or telling people what to do. They are open for calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call: 116 123 (free) or email: jo@samaritans.org

If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned about a friend, check out the Stay Alive app:

www.prevent-suicide.org.uk
