

Gender Detransition

*a path towards self-
acceptance*



**POST
TRANS**

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Foreword

Hello, we are Elie and Nele – two female detransitioners from Belgium and Germany. We are the founders of Post Trans, a project giving visibility and resources to detransitioners. Both of us identified as trans men for a few years, during which we took testosterone and underwent a mastectomy. As we realised that this was not a path that we wanted to continue on, we struggled to find resources on the topic of detransition. This booklet, as well as our website post-trans.com, aim

to raise awareness around the issue of detransition and provide valuable information to any person questioning their gender transition. If you don't know what detransition means, we invite you to read the following pages. If you are looking for information about how to detransition medically and alternatives to deal with gender dysphoria, you can directly go to the second part of the booklet, starting from page 32.

Our approach is based on the personal testimonies of detransitioners themselves. The intention behind this initiative is not to invalidate any personal experience or identity, but rather to show the complexity and the diversity of journeys that are often overlooked.



Elie is a 22-year-old social science student from Belgium. She has done research on the topic of detransition and is devoted to working further to improve the lives of dysphoric people and gender non-conforming women and girls.



Nele is a 24-year-old freelance illustrator and comic book author from Germany. She is currently doing her masters in graphic storytelling while working on a comic project on the topic of detransition.

You can find a digital version of this booklet on our website post-trans.com/detransition-booklet

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all the detransitioners and desisters who contributed by sharing their personal experiences and perspectives,

the Detransition Advocacy Network and Charlie Evans in particular,

Stephanie Davies-Arai and the organisation TransgenderTrend,

Dr J. William Malone

the volunteers who helped us with the translations,

and the many other people who have been devoting time and efforts to improving detransitioners' lives.

We have been amazed by all the ways in which solidarity can take form and we want to express our full gratitude to all the women, lesbians, and other people who believed in our project.

It will quickly appear when going through the pages that the booklet is full of quotes and information coming from a number of detransitioners and desisters themselves. We gathered their experiences with the help of an online questionnaire, asking them about the challenges that they faced, the wishes that they

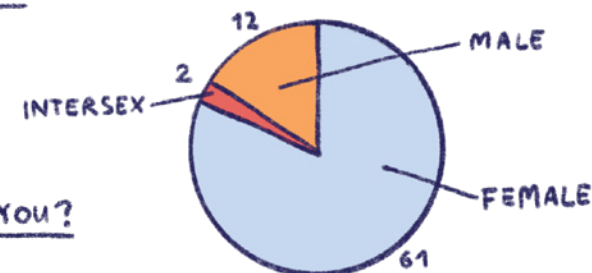
have, the advice that they can give, the coping strategies that they found, with regard to their social and/or medical detransition.

The questionnaire was conducted in November 2020. You can find a small overview of the participants below.

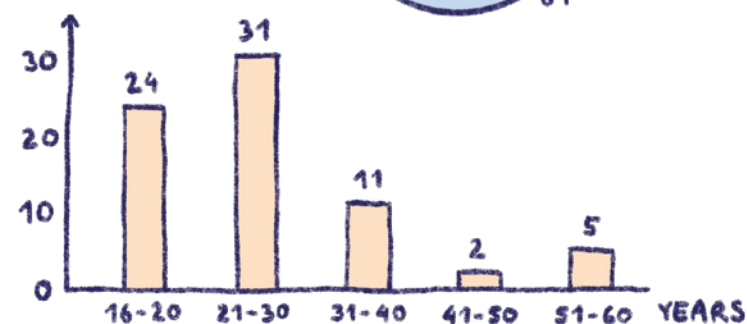
TOTAL AMOUNT OF PARTICIPANTS

75

WHAT IS YOUR NATAL SEX?



HOW OLD ARE YOU?



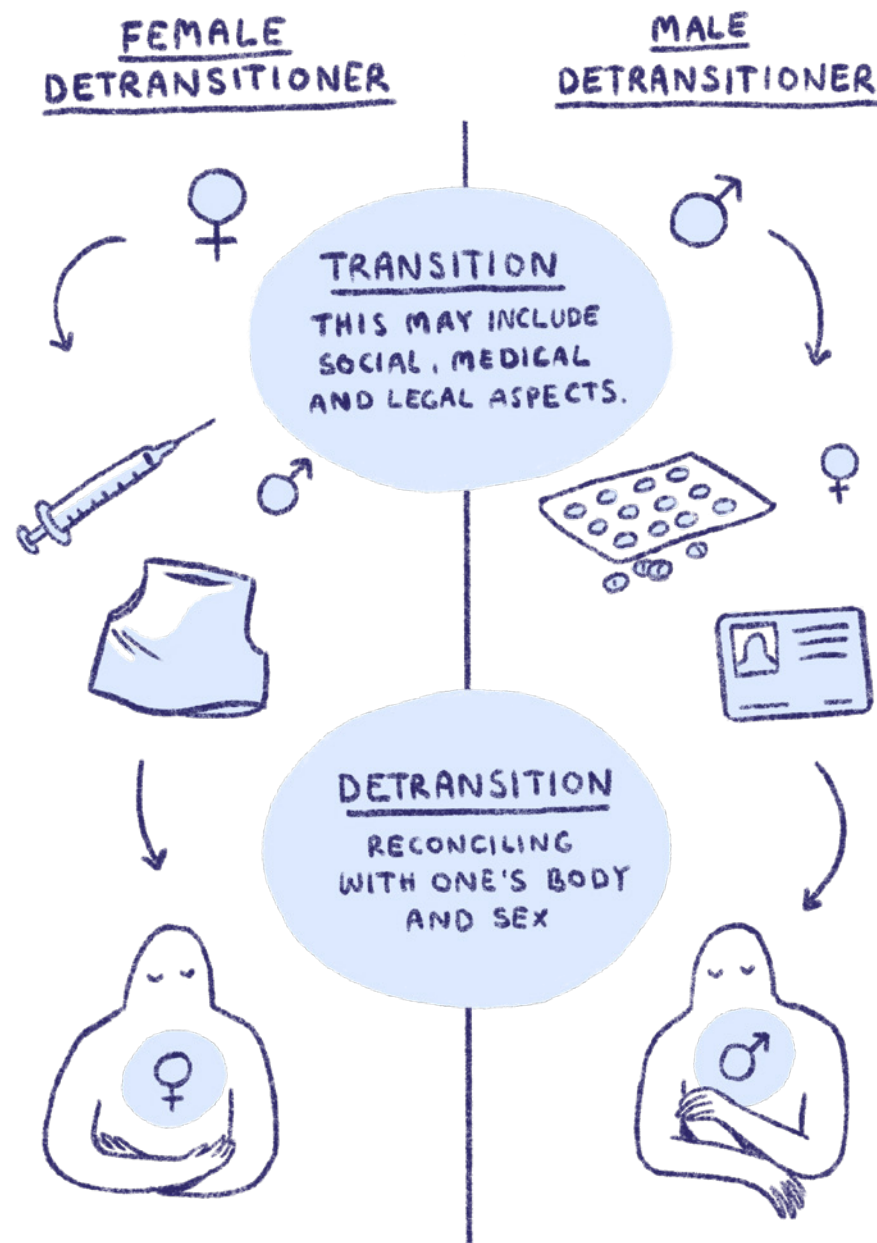
What does detransition mean?

There is no widely accepted definition of detransition. In this booklet, we choose to refer to detransition as the choice that one makes about ceasing their social and medical transition to another sex/gender. Those who went through a social transition (came out, changed their name, etc.) but stopped their process before undergoing any trans-related treatment or surgery will be referred to as 'desisters'.

What detransitioners and desisters have in common is a profound questioning of their relationship to gender and the origins of their body discomfort, which led them to wish for transition in the first place.

In the following pages, you will find a few testimonies of female detransitioners who shared their stories with Post Trans.

Many more extracts coming from both female and male detransitioners and desisters will be displayed throughout the booklet to show a variety of experiences and viewpoints.





***'Transitioning didn't fix
any of my problems.'***

Talia's Story

I went to a single-sex school where I was surrounded by only girls for 3 years. It was at the point in our lives where everyone around me was so conscious of their appearances, their clothes and how they looked to boys. These things never concerned me, and I quickly felt 'separated' from others. I never 'felt like' other girls. Lesbians were feared and so the thought that I could be one didn't dare cross my mind.

I despised the way boys looked at me after puberty and I covered my body as much as possible and developed an eating disorder.

Because I didn't see myself in other girls, I felt like my body was wrong. I began struggling with depression and anxiety and it was soon after this that I discovered the online trans community, who enabled my feelings of self-hatred and led me to believe that transitioning was the cure to all my problems.

So I came out as FtM*.

I lived as a man for almost three years and was referred to an adult gender clinic for HRT** until I experienced an awful depressive episode and realised that transitioning had not fixed any of my problems. I went to therapy for the first time in my life and realised that I was an autistic butch lesbian. I realised that I was never meant, or needed to 'feel like' other girls and that I could be my own authentic self - and still be female.

After years of self-hatred and denial, I'm finally getting to know my autistic, masculine, female self, and I love her.

** FtM stands for
'female-to-male'*

*** HRT stands for 'hormone
replacement therapy'*



'Loving the woman inside of me is the best form of self-love I've ever given myself.'

Brit's Story

I will be 30 years old next month. I have been looking forward to this birthday for a long time. And even more so now that I am living my most authentic, true life.

I spent the last decade trying to convince myself that I was a man. I was 19 years old when I decided that I was going to transition.

I had two therapy sessions before I started hormones, which at the time, was completely okay with me. I was ready to rush right through the process of transitioning because all I cared about was finally passing as male. And that was the biggest disservice I've ever done to myself.

I don't believe I ever truly had 'Gender Identity Disorder'. I was never comfortable in my skin as a woman before transitioning. Society said I needed to be XYZ in order to be a woman, and I was none of those things. So transitioning felt right and nobody could have told me a thing about it. I changed my

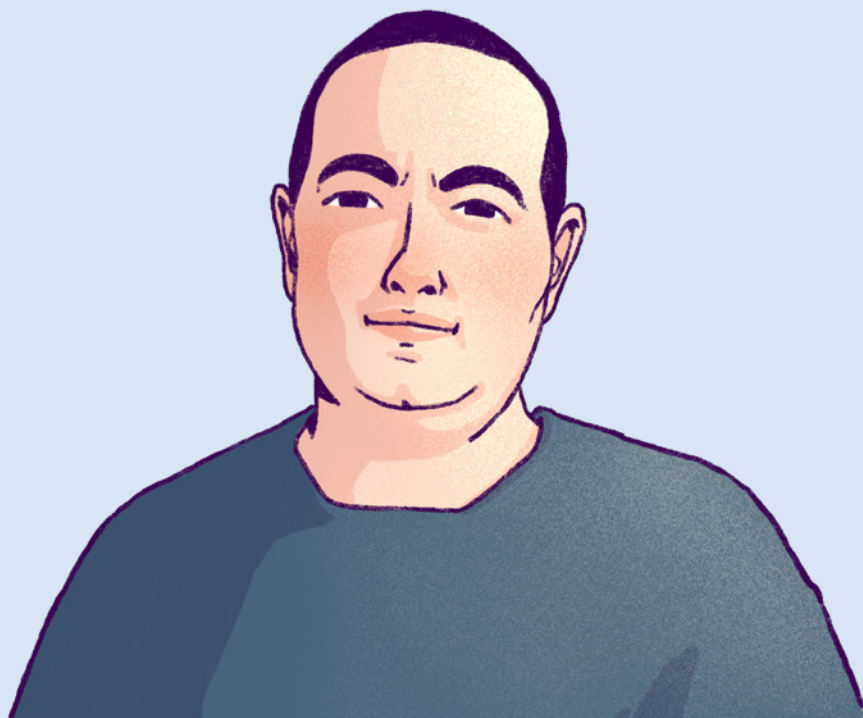
legal name and gender ten months after I started testosterone, and had top surgery two months after that.

Then for the next ten years, I struggled with depression, anxiety, and actual gender dysphoria*. Something I never truly understood, until I tried to be the man I wasn't.

So 9 months ago, I stopped taking my hormones for good, and have since started the process of detransitioning. And let me tell you, it's truly the best decision I've ever made for myself.

I missed the woman I never got to be, but then I realised that she was staring in the mirror at me all along. My name is Brit, and I am *she*.

** Gender dysphoria is a medical term referring to the strong, persistent feeling that a person's biological sex does not match the person's inner sense of self. It is usually associated with strong body discomfort with regard to one's sex characteristics.*



***'Transgender identity
offered me an explanation
for why I was wrong.'***

Carol's Story

Transgender identity offered me an explanation for why I was wrong. I've felt different my whole life. I never felt like I was really a girl because I never seemed to be able to act like the other girls acted.

When I was 6 years old, I cried and screamed because I didn't want to wear a dress. When I was 9, I begged my mother for a football. She said, 'No, football is for boys'. At school kids made fun of me for acting like a boy. I was told the way I was wrong, that I needed to behave like a girl. Yet I could not seem to do this thing that came so naturally to all the women and girls I saw around me.

My early life experiences had a lasting impact on my sense of self and self-esteem, and I grew to resent my female body. I hated being a woman. Unlike many detrans women, I lived many years as a butch lesbian woman before transitioning at the age of 34. I had a series of

life changing events happen after the age of 30 that drove me into a deep dark depression. It seemed like I was drowning, and my dysphoria became unbearable. The only way out I could see was transition.

I'm not going to sit here and say transitioning didn't help my dysphoria, because it did. But the reasons it helped became obvious after taking T for four years and having a double mastectomy. It helped because I didn't have to live in a world that thought I was wrong.

I started taking antidepressants for my depression and they enabled me to begin to ask the hard questions necessary to address my dysphoria without continuing to live as trans. It's been the hardest and most humbling thing I've ever had to do in my life, but I'm glad everyday that I detransitioned. I feel for the first time in my life I am truly living authentically. I'm a mother, a wife, a lesbian and I'm sure people still think I don't act like a woman. But I know now that I'm not wrong, they are.



'Radical acceptance has given me peace of mind'

Keira's Story

From age 14 I started to feel disconnected from my body and that there was something wrong about my strong gender nonconformity. Transitioning to male seemed to be my solution after being stuck in severe depression and anxiety whilst the girls around me seemed to be so happy and content. I thought transitioning would allow me to better navigate the world and my body, I would no longer have to deal with the traumatizing bodily processes and impracticalities that come with being female, it would give me strength and control over my life, I wouldn't have so many expectations put onto me that I didn't want to live up to, I would look more physically attractive, I wouldn't feel awkward and uncomfortable about having lesbian sex.

I was given blockers at 16. Testosterone at 17. A double mastectomy at 20.

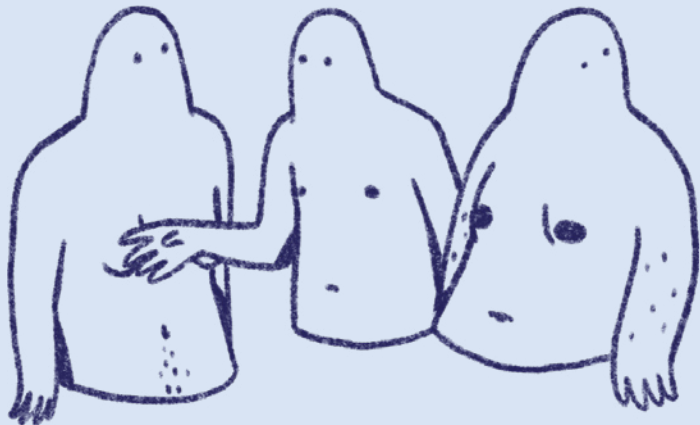
A year after my surgery it was like the smoke began to clear and I began to think clearly. Neither could the hormones nor any surgery ever make me male. I realised I would forever need to disclose my transition to people because despite how much I passed I was not like my male friends, I would forever be a woman. A woman who had now been altered (a reminder every time I saw my naked self). I was still alienated, depressed, anxious

I put a stop to the injections and started to analyse my mind. I was not born wrong, I had not freed myself, I was still subconsciously trapped in the notion of gender conformity. My body is now sore, broken and disorientated. I was missing role models and a sense of community as a gender nonconforming girl. I was missing education about my female body. I was missing love and acceptance.

Common biases against detransition

Detransition is a phenomenon that is very much marginalised, and a lot of prejudiced views circulate around the subject.

When asked about the challenges faced while detransitioning or desisting, many expressed difficulties related to the distorted image that detransitioners are often given.



Detransitioners all have the same anti-trans political beliefs

'People call me transphobic all the time. I try to raise awareness for detransition and desistance whenever possible and appropriate (because that's what I needed before I knew) and I almost always get replies calling me transphobic and intolerant.'

Female desister, 16

'For me, detransitioning came with a whole new perspective and worldview. I feel like I lost my religion when I detransitioned. This is a big deal and I wish people understood more about this. Detransitioners are diverse, have very diverse outlooks and perspectives. There is no one detrans perspective on the world, gender, or transsexualism.'

Female detransitioner, 32

'Detransition has nothing to do with one's beliefs on transgender identities, and far more to do with the evolution of one's self understanding.'

Male desister, 20



'It wasn't a lack of dysphoria that led me to detransition, it was a realisation that my dysphoria stemmed from trauma and internalised homophobia.'

Detransitioners never experienced gender dysphoria*

'Detransition is hard - just because someone is no longer transitioning does not mean they did/do not have dysphoria. Detransitioners often struggle internally with pursuing a body they want vs. loving or doing what they think is best for the body they have.'
Female detransitioner, 29

Detransitioners were never trans

'I stuck very rigidly to male gender roles and never had a single doubt about transition. My transition was ultimately a result of childhood trauma and emotional neglect, and I wish more people knew that. It wasn't a lack of dysphoria that led me to detransition, it was a realisation that my dysphoria stemmed from trauma and internalised homophobia. From there, I came to the conclusion it would be healthier to work through those things rather than continuing to transition. The idea that detrans people were "cis people all along" is completely false.'

Female detransitioner, 19

'Even though I am not necessarily living my life presenting myself as anything other than female, I still could tick boxes of being trans, and I still feel some connection with that label and experience. I have a lot in common with transgender people, I am only approaching my gender dysphoria from a different perspective.'

Female detransitioner, 22

'I felt like I was putting a bad name to the trans community/ coming off as a "trender" or faking it. I genuinely found comfort in identifying as trans when I did. That changed. There's no underlying agenda, I just grew.'

Female desister, 19

'Detransitioning is not a result of societal pressure, it's a personal decision that we make because we were looking for a solution

where we wouldn't find one.'

People only detransition because of discrimination

'Detransitioning is not a result of societal pressure, it's a personal decision that we make because we were looking for a solution where we wouldn't find one and that's okay. People change and grow every day and detransitioning doesn't make us transphobic or "converted" or whatever, we're just learning and growing.'

Female desister, 19

'People may detransition because transition didn't work well enough, it caused health issues, it wasn't satisfying, their dysphoria desisted, etc. Those

**** Gender dysphoria is a term referring to the strong, persistent feeling that a person's biological sex does not match the person's inner sense of self. It is usually associated with strong body discomfort with regard to one's sex characteristics.***

are infinitely more common reasons than the supposed "lack of support, societal transphobia, misdiagnosis" explanation that people like to use to delegitimise us and our concerns for dysphoric people.' Female detransitioner, 19

Detransitioners all go back to presenting stereotypically as expected from their birth sex

'It was hard to get people to accept that I wanted to return to being seen as female without adopting gender stereotypes and roles. I was constantly accused of actually being non-binary, or suppressing myself with internal transphobia.' Intersex female detransitioner, 29

'No one believes any of my experiences are real, or they say I'm not really detransitioning because I still have dysphoria and wear men's clothing.' Female detransitioner, 28

All detransitioners will eventually retransition or commit suicide

'I believed that every other person who had detransitioned

before me had eventually either retransitioned or committed suicide, so I was very frightened.' Female detransitioner, 37

Detransition cases should not be taken seriously because they are so rare

'I always get told that detransitioners are too rare to be given importance. It is used as an excuse not to take us seriously, despite the fact that nobody knows how many we actually are. Even if we were just a small number of cases, don't we have the right to be heard and to be respected?' Female detransitioner, 21

'Even if we were just a small number of cases, don't we have the right to be heard and to be respected?'

These beliefs are very harmful, because they are often used to reject detransitioners' and desisters' experiences. Many lose the support from the trans community when detransitioning and it can be a very isolating experience.

'In detransition, I would have liked to have a friend who believed me, and wanted to hear me. I thought coming out as trans would make me feel unwelcome and misunderstood, but nothing has ever made me feel as lonely as going the opposite way.' Female desister, 35

'My friends were all trans/ LGBT and I felt shunned. I felt like suddenly no one liked me, because I was no longer part of the club. I felt so alone already, and then when people stopped talking to me I felt worse and I wished I had stayed trans.' Female desister, 21

'I lost almost all of my friends. I was no longer welcome in any spaces where there were trans people.' Female desister



A better future for detransitioners and desisters

We asked detransitioners and desisters to tell us about what they would like to see changing in relation to their own experiences of detransition. Here is a collection of their answers.

Better public understanding of detransition and more empathy

'Public understanding of detransition seems to be very poor at the moment, with a lot of negative perceptions and hurt feelings around the subject which make people uncomfortable with it. Ideally, I hope people will learn to treat a detransition with the same respect, openness, acceptance, validation and encouragement as a transition, so people who have been through this process will still feel welcomed in the LGBT community (most detransitioners are still some kind of LGBT).' Female detransitioner, 39

'Rather than treating detransitioners with cynicism, making fun of them or having the "I-told-you-so" line, I would rather people showed more sympathy to why these detrans people felt they needed to make such a big choice to begin with - that this has been a difficult but necessary path and that the feelings we had were serious and not naive.'
Female detransitioner, 21

'Unfortunately, detransition is not as simple as stopping hormones and changing your appearance, name, pronouns, etc. There are physical, psychological, social, and other wounds that will take a long time to heal. This healing is made more difficult by being abandoned by the trans community and your trans healthcare provider after detransitioning.' Male detransitioned, 38

'I want people to understand that the opinions we develop that may seem too radical or even invalidating to trans people are a result of our experiences, not ideas meant to hurt people.'
Female desister, 19

More research into the different ways in which gender dysphoria can be treated

'I wish there would be more of a focus on and understanding that the disconnect one might have with their body is not always "you are trans" and the immediate thing being to treat it with transition. Just a deeper knowledge in general of why people disconnect from their bodies, and why medically altering them and



changing your social position would be desirable for some in those positions.'
Female desister, 25

'Detrans people often still experience gender dysphoria, but medical transition was not the answer, which lends itself to the notion that other methods of treatment need to be explored.'
Female detransitioner, 26

More screening and more therapy to look into the reasons behind the wish for transitioning

'I would have liked someone to actually work with me on why I felt isolated and alone, rather than insisting I was like that because I should be a boy or I wasn't a girl. I would have also liked my intersex condition to have been diagnosed and treated before any kind of transgender related treatment, because intersex bodies are especially sensitive to all this.'
Intersex female detransitioner, 29

'I would have liked to have more in-depth therapy as a *requirement* for transition. It was an option I could have taken, at an extra cost, but I did not take it because I simply wasn't ready to face all the feelings of doubt and fear about transition that I had repressed inside myself.' Female detransitioner, 22

'I wish before transition I had been asked about trauma, and had been able to experience some trauma therapy because that ultimately was the biggest factor in the discomfort I had with my body. I think it's a failing of the medical services that I was able to transition at such a young age despite them knowing I was in an abusive household, and that needs to change.'
Female detransitioner, 19

'I wish I had had more mental health support and therapy, and that I had been asked gently searching questions about why I felt and believed certain things, not with any negative intent to make me "not trans", but with a positive intent for us both to make sure I wanted to alter my body and social role for healthy reasons.'
Female detransitioner, 39

'I wish there'd been more screening, that they'd look more into why I wanted to transition. Although thinking about it now, my younger self wouldn't want to know anything about it. I was sure of myself back then.'
Female detransitioner, 24

'I desperately wish that my trauma and mental health issues had been looked at. I had zero therapy. I had 3 appointments before I got testosterone. It all happened so fast. They removed my breasts with zero psychological evaluation.' Female detransitioner, 28

Better support from therapists during detransition

'I'm so tired of therapists encouraging me to retransition or saying that I must've been bullied into detransition. That's all wrong. I transitioned to escape my reality as a woman and an abuse survivor. People in the psychological field need to acknowledge that and realise that siding with the most progressive affirmative take is actually super damaging.' Female detransitioner, 30

'I would have liked someone to actually work with me on why I felt isolated and alone, rather than insisting I was like that because I should be a boy or I wasn't a girl.'

Better access to resources and information about transition and detransition

'I wish there was more access to information and resources. especially for negative consequences of medically transitioning. I think it's important to give people every aspect of information so they can make a decision they're happy with.' Female detransitioner, 30

'Detransitioners are not spoken as a group or phenomenon, though, not in my time at the clinic. I was only informed about there being "regretters" when I signed the papers and consent for the treatments, but not explained further why there were people who didn't find the treatments working for them.' Female detransitioner, 28

'I would have liked to have known that it is 100% okay to be a woman who just happens to have gender dysphoria, and that dysphoria doesn't mean you should transition right away. I also would have liked to have known that detransitioning is a thing (I had never heard of it before I specifically researched what to do).' Female desister

'I would have liked for there to be more recognition of transition as a symptom, or a kind of self-erasure, a means of dealing with trauma and mental health issues, and not a cure for these things.' Male desister, 36

'One thing I would have liked is information about autistic people's experiences with gender (preferably from an autistic person) because this would have helped me understand myself quicker and better.' Female desister, 19

A more diverse representation of gender nonconforming women and female role models

'I would have liked someone to tell me that there are many ways to be a woman, which would have allowed me to understand that being a woman is not fitting into stereotypes.' Female desister, 27

'I suppose I would have liked to have known that most girls feel the way I felt. I thought I was part of a minority that hated my sex and the way I was treated by society. Now I know most women feel this way, especially in puberty.'

'I thought I was part of a minority that hated my sex and the way I was treated by society. Now I know most women feel this way, especially in puberty.'

Everyone just reacts differently. Maybe I would not have felt so alienated from my female peers.' Female detransitioner, 21

'I wish I would have been informed that being intersex didn't mean I was in between two sexes and that I was still female, despite my differences. Also, I would have liked it if more role models were around showing me women don't have to fit rigid stereotypes.' Intersex female detransitioner, 29

'I wish I could have just experimented with gender performance and even social transition without being pressured towards permanent medical intervention. I wish there were more of a space for non-gendered androgyny. That would have taken a lot of pressure off.' Female desister, 30

'I wish that I'd known more butch lesbians and that I'd known that there was no wrong way to be female. I wish there was more community for lesbians so that we could all talk about our experiences and find some common ground.' Female desister, 17



Detransitioning medically

Most detransitioners don't really know what to expect when stopping their medical transition. It is very difficult to find information on this coming from health professionals, as there is a lack of research overall about medical detransition.

We asked detransitioners to tell us about their experiences with going off hormones or

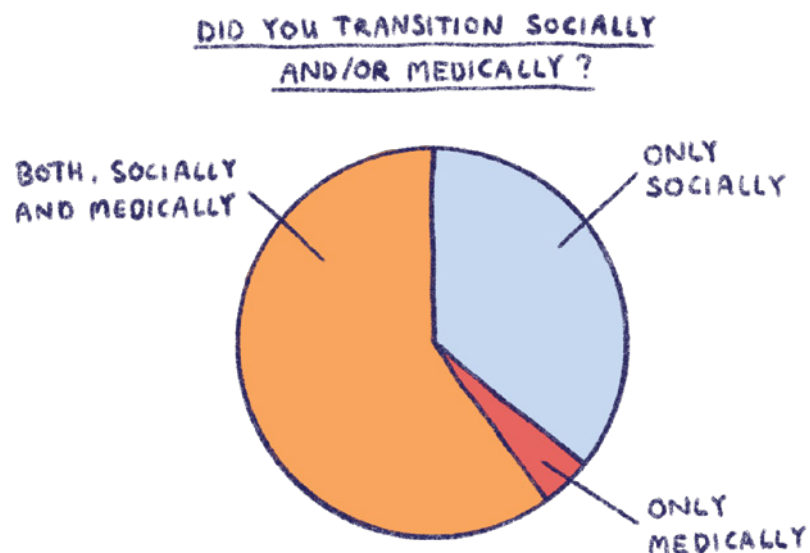
changing their treatment, and here is the information that we have gathered. It is important to keep in mind that there are many different ways in which bodies can react, so nothing out of here is to be generalised.

In case of doubt or difficulty related to your health, we strongly encourage you to consult a doctor.

Stopping hormone therapy as a female detransitioner

The most reported physical changes when stopping testosterone treatment (and starting to take oestrogen for those who underwent a hysterectomy) are:

- ▶ Body fat redistribution and face refeminisation
- ▶ A decrease in body hair growth (although often remains more than before HRT*)
- ▶ Breast growth for those who did not undergo a mastectomy
- ▶ For those who underwent a mastectomy, depending on the remaining breast tissue, a small growth appears to be possible. Changes also often occur due to fat redistribution in this area as well
- ▶ Muscle mass decrease
- ▶ Hairline regrowth (not always fully back as before testosterone treatment, depending on how much loss there was)
- ▶ Less/slower beard growth
- ▶ Voice gets slightly higher/softer
- ▶ Period coming back, from a few weeks to a few months after stopping HRT



Other changes were also reported by some such as a **smoother skin, decrease in acne, softening of the clitoris, lower sex drive, change in body smell and weight loss.**

A number of participants also reported that the health issues caused by testosterone treatment improved after ceasing hormones. For example, **vaginal atrophy or severe dryness, strong pelvic pain, high blood pressure, kidney and liver issues, urinary incontinence, etc.** For some, these issues never fully reversed.

Some detransitioners who underwent a hysterectomy also reported health issues (such as nettle rash and hypothyroidism), which they related to **their body not producing sex hormones on its own anymore** and the fact that it took them years to access proper treatment.

Others who took hormone blockers reported having a **low bone density** as a consequence.

Emotional changes were also reported due to stopping HRT. Many felt that **their body needed time to readapt** and went through a few weeks of having **low energy and poor mental health.**

Some also expressed their recovered ability to cry and experience a wider range of emotions after stopping taking testosterone.

** HRT stands for 'hormone replacement therapy'*

Stopping hormone therapy as a male detransitioner

The sample of male detransitioners sharing their insights was much smaller than the female one. The following information is based on the experiences of the eight male detransitioners who answered the questionnaire.

The physical changes when stopping oestrogen treatment and/or androgen blockers (and starting to take testosterone for those who underwent a gonadectomy) are:

- ▶ Breast size reduction (although not fully back to the way it was)
- ▶ Some body fat redistribution
- ▶ Hair loss
- ▶ Body hair thickening/darkening
- ▶ Beard growth
- ▶ Increased muscle mass



However, these changes do not seem to occur for everyone. One male detransitioner who was on HRT for 13 years reported that very little had changed since he switched to testosterone seven years ago. Another one explains that he experienced extreme symptoms of hormonal imbalance after quitting cross-sex HRT and that, even now that he is taking same-sex hormones, his body still struggles to develop muscle mass, and his sexual function is lacking. Another detransitioner explained that taking

oestrogen and then testosterone treatment affected his pituitary gland.

In terms of emotional changes, someone reported having less mood swings since switching from oestrogen to testosterone treatment. Someone else reports extreme mental health side effects such as severe depression with suicidality, dissociation and psychotic symptoms caused by spironolactone (testosterone blocker). These issues mostly resolved after stopping the treatment.



This previous section highlights the fact that everybody reacts differently to hormonal treatments, and that it is really important to get all potential health issues checked by medical professionals when taking or stopping HRT.

In order to complement this section with more practical medical information, we asked the endocrinologist Dr William Malone to answer a few of our questions.

What are the long-term negative health effects of puberty blockers?

W.J.M. 'Puberty blockers are the first medicalised step in the gender-affirmative treatment model and they have been misrepresented as a safe "pause button", giving young people time to clarify their identities. Current evidence, however, shows that they have negative effects on bone and possibly brain health. Young people on puberty blockers do not develop bone density like they should.'

What are the long-term negative health effects of treatment with cross-sex hormones?

W.J.M. 'Treatment with cross-sex hormones is associated with long-term health risks, including a significantly higher risk of heart attacks and stroke. Current studies show a four-fold increased risk of heart attacks in biological



Dr William J. Malone is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Endocrinology and Director of the Society for Evidence-based Gender Medicine (SEGM).



If you would like to find more information about stopping medical transition, you can find a document called 'Principles of Hormone Discontinuation' by W. J. Malone on the resources section of the website of Post Trans.

females who take testosterone, and more than three times the risk of blood clots for biological males who take oestrogen. Additional risks include breast cancer, high blood pressure, and liver damage. Vaginal atrophy and uterine pain have also been described in females taking testosterone.'

What can be done to prevent these negative side effects?

W.J.M. 'Preventing side effects is always challenging in any area of medicine. Any person taking or who has taken puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones should be under the close supervision of a physician who can monitor for potential side effects and then act accordingly.'

What are the consequences of undergoing a hysterectomy/gonadectomy?

W.J.M. 'A hysterectomy/gonadectomy will leave a female sterile. Any woman who has her ovaries removed will need some form of oestrogen replacement to prevent negative effects on her bones, heart, brain, skin and hair.'

What can be done to deal with the negative effects of vaginal atrophy and premature menopause in females who underwent testosterone treatment and/or a hysterectomy?

W.J.M. 'Treatment with oestrogen replacement should reverse vaginal atrophy and control or eliminate menopausal symptoms.'

Alternative ways to deal with gender dysphoria



Medical transition is often offered as the only way to deal with strong body discomfort associated with gender and sex characteristics (commonly referred to as gender dysphoria). As previously mentioned, the lack of alternatives offered is perceived as a real problem by many detransitioners and desisters, for whom medically and socially transitioning did

not turn out to be a fulfilling long-term solution. Since most of them still experienced forms of gender dysphoria while detransitioning, they had to find alternative ways to cope.

In this section, you will find a collection of strategies that detransitioners and desisters have found to handle their body discomfort.

Psychological treatment and meditation techniques

Many find that therapy is very helpful for identifying the tangible sources of their discomfort, to then address them. Commonly reported underlying issues are PTSD* or other (sexual) trauma-based disorders, body dysmorphia, psychosis, etc.

Some detransitioners and desisters found that talk therapy, trauma processing, somatic-based therapy, eating disorder treatment, dysmorphia treatment and cognitive-behavioural therapy were beneficial.

A few who dealt with severe mental health issues such as psychosis, heavy depression and anxiety reported that medication also helped with their body discomfort.

Many find that meditation and mindfulness are helpful, as well as physical activities such as working out, practicing yoga and body awareness exercises. Self-soothing talk also appeared to be relieving for some.

Journaling was reported to be a useful technique as well for identifying and then reflecting on the external sources of body discomfort.

'Learning that, in my case the feelings of discomfort were caused by something tangible and explainable helped me realise that those feelings weren't permanent or unchanging.'

Male detransitioner, 23

* Post-traumatic stress disorder

Radical acceptance of biological reality and acknowledgement of gender dysphoria

A great deal of relief for a number of detransitioners and desisters comes from the full acceptance of one's biological reality. A few explained that, once they reached the conclusion that it was rationally impossible to change their sex, they didn't feel the need to strive towards this goal anymore. This led them to learn to accept their body rather than fighting it, which alleviated their gender dysphoria.

Others explained that an important step for them was to accept that their body discomfort was there and that it might never completely go away, but that transition was simply not the right path for them.

'I can't become male, so I don't need to strive towards it.'

I will always be female, and if it can't be changed then it must be acceptable. I had to learn to live with it or I would never be satisfied.'

Female desister, 21

Detaching oneself from external judgement

Learning to stop worrying about the way others perceive you and to stop fixating on appearances seems to be an important step towards body acceptance. It might be a long and difficult process, but a few detransitioners and desisters reported that stopping trying

to control how others perceive them and instead prioritising body needs relieved their discomfort immensely.

'My current strategy is just putting my life before appearances. I don't allow myself to feed into hyper fixating on how I look or how I am perceived. I give those thoughts the same treatment that I do with my depression related distortions.'

Female detransitioner, 22

Untangling gender stereotypes and internalised homophobia

Many detransitioners and desisters found that a lot of what triggered their dysphoria in the first place was the internalising of strict gender roles.

Female individuals in particular reported dealing with deeply internalised misogyny, resulting in strong physical and social discomfort. Developing a feminist consciousness and reaching the conclusion that being a woman does not require anything else than being female freed many detrans women from a great deal of their gender dysphoria.

Realising that being female or male has nothing to do with fitting into rigid gender stereotypes as well as learning to embrace oneself as a masculine woman or as a feminine man appeared to be key elements of the reconciliation process.

'The gross majority of my dysphoria was mental and related to preconceived notions of the roles of men, the way men were "supposed" to deal with emotions, and the social roles of men.'

Male desister, 20

For many lesbian and gay detransitioners, internalised homophobia also played a big role in their wish to transition, and working on unlearning this prejudice was necessary in order to alleviate their dysphoria.

Finding communities and role models

A lot of female detransitioners and desisters emphasised the need for finding feminist and lesbian communities, as they say it helped them feel less alone and become aware of the various ways in which gender nonconforming women live their lives. Realising that many other women have similar struggles with their female bodies and femininity makes it easier to be more indulgent toward oneself.

In addition to that, finding role models with similar bodies and gender nonconformity is reported to be really helpful for learning to feel more at peace with one's body and sexuality.

'Reading personal accounts and advice online by detransitioners and lesbians while stopping transition was massively

helpful. They provided information, reassurance and a sense of belonging I did not feel anywhere else.'

Female detransitioners, 21



***Thinking of gender dysphoria
in a different way***

One detransitioner described gender dysphoria as 'an umbrella term for a myriad of unpleasant gender experiences.' Recognising that and actively looking into the feelings causing this discomfort can be a source of relief. Some explained that they simply stopped using the term gender dysphoria and started naming each feeling for what they realised that it actually was. For example, 'discomfort from being seen as a woman', or 'feeling uncomfortable with my breasts'.

'I had more of a reframing of my view in regard to my dysphoria. I still experience it (less often)

but am aware now that this is not because my body is wrong, but because I have shame about my body and this is not my fault. This allows sympathy for myself and I am less likely to hurt myself over these feelings.'

Female detransitioner, 21



Advice from detrans to detrans

'You are so much more resilient than you think. There is life beyond gender dysphoria, life after detransition. It will be okay.'
Female detransitioner, 22

'Take your time. Seek professional help, especially if you already have mental health issues, because going off hormones can worsen them while your body is adjusting. Allow yourself to explore your identity and to not base it on gender or your appearance but on your character formed by your interests, strengths and social connections with others.'
Female detransitioner, 19

'You're not alone. You've not ruined yourself. You did what you thought was best for you in that time, in that place, with the knowledge you had. Be patient with yourself and your body. Be kind to yourself. Find a therapist you can talk about your detransition if you need to.'
Female detransitioner, 28

'Absorb all information from all sources. It was okay to be wrong this time, and it'll be okay to be wrong a second time. What matters is your feelings and happiness.'
Male detransitioner, 23

'Look for community so that you're not alone, because you're not. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, or go through it alone, because it's been done before, many times, in so many different ways. Something we all learned when we found out the world was big enough for us to transition is still true: the world is big enough for us to detransition as well.'
Female desister, 25

'The silver lining of ceasing transition is being allowed the space to simply be yourself. Let this be a positive change and give yourself the freedom of a child.'
Female detransitioner, 21

'Do not feel pressured to dress or groom yourself in a way that triggered dysphoria in the past, and definitely do not feel pressured into undergoing any invasive medical procedures aimed at "passing" better. Basically, put health and self-acceptance first.'
Female detransitioner, 37

'You are not alone. There are lots of people like you and you're not being a bad person for growing and realising your identity is changing. Detransitioning feels like an admittance of failure or fault, but I promise you it is not.'
Female desister, 19

Resources

detransadv.com

The Detransitioners' Advocacy Network (TDAN) is a charitable, non-profit, global effort to improve the well-being of detransitioned people everywhere.

detranscanada.com

Detrans Canada is an independent and non-partisan advocacy organisation that supports detransitioning, desisting, and re-identifying Canadians.

detransvoices.org

Detrans Voices is a project dedicated to providing support and information for people detransitioning and/or desisting from transgender self-identification.

piqueresproject.com

The Pique Resilience Project was created by four detransitioned and desisted women with the goal of sharing their stories and providing information on detransitioning, as well as support for those who may be questioning their gender or identity.

post-trans.com

Post Trans is a project led by two female detransitioners whose objective is to give visibility and resources to detransitioners and desisters.

lostintransition.info

Lost in Transition is a Sydney based Australian support group for those who were not helped by their transition.

reddit.com/r/detrans

detransinfo.tumblr.com

redressalert.tumblr.com

segm.org

SEGM is an international group of clinicians and researchers whose aim is to promote safe, compassionate, ethical and evidence-informed healthcare for children, adolescents, and young adults with gender dysphoria.

iatdd.com

IATDD is an international group of therapists working together to better understand the needs and challenges faced by desisting and detransitioning people.

How can LGBTQI organisations support detransitioners and desisters?

Including detrans people explicitly in their
programs and welcoming them to their activities

Representing detrans people in their
resources and websites

Offering different alternatives to
gender dysphoric people for dealing with
their discomfort

Fighting gender stereotypes and valuing
gender nonconformity

Providing information about legal, social and
medical detransition

Giving space for detrans people to share their
experiences

Raising awareness about the topic
of detransition

Reaching out to detrans organisations

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