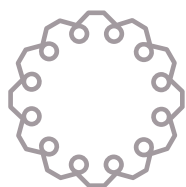


GENDER EUPHORIA AND SEX

**A RESOURCE EXPLORING GENDER, SEX AND CONSENT
FOR TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE**



Zoe Belle
Gender Collective

Trans and gender diverse people deserve to enjoy pleasure, love and intimacy in whatever ways are right for us.

Sex and intimacy can be a positive, empowering and gender euphoric experience. However, for trans and gender diverse people there can sometimes be additional challenges around navigating consent, and communicating our sexual boundaries.

Trans people are all so beautiful and we are so diverse in how we experience and express our gender. I just wish we could get rid of the idea that you have to look or act a certain way just to be valid. We are all valid and worthy of respect and love.

– Gem, non-binary

Gender euphoria is the feeling of joy and happiness a trans or gender diverse person feels about their gender and/or body.

For me gender euphoria is feeling confident and affirmed in the fact that my body, whatever it looks like, is mine and it's male because I'm male, therefore my body is male. All my parts are male. The idea that I'm not in the wrong body, I am just in a body and that body is mine.

– Zac, trans man

Dysphoria is the feeling of distress, anxiety, or intense discomfort that some of us may feel about our body, body parts, or how we're gendered by others. Not all trans and gender diverse people experience it. It can sometimes be triggered by sex and intimacy. These feelings may also change over time and be dependent on partner/s – or the situation.

In the past I felt really nervous around how people would perceive and interact with my body, especially my chest and genitals. I always worried they'd misgender me, find me unattractive once they saw me naked, or pressure me into doing things that made me feel dysphoric.

– Gem, non-binary



When you are respected and have positive experiences in negotiating consent, you are more likely to experience gender euphoria during sex and intimacy.

Some important things to ask yourself before engaging in sexual activities with someone are:

- How am I feeling?
- Is sex something I want with this person, at this time, or at all?
- How would I like to have sex, what would I like to try, and what gives me pleasure?
- What are my boundaries around my body and how do I want it interacted with?
- What language would I like used to describe different aspects of my body?
- What language would I like used around my gender?
- How can I have clear conversations with my sexual partner/s around consent and sexual health?
- What are ways I feel empowered in my gender during sex?
- Where can I go to get support?

Can we start with – How are you going? How are you feeling? Are there parts of your body that you're more or less comfortable with? Are there ways that I can make you feel more comfortable with those parts of your body?

– Crystal, trans woman¹

If you decide to have sex, here are some ways you can make it more pleasurable:

- Share what you both want to do, what brings you pleasure, what you might want to explore together.
- Have open communication before, during and after sex, about what feels good.
- Establish verbal and non-verbal cues for communication during sex. This might be safe words, like red for 'stop' and green for 'things are good' – or gestures like having a hand up for 'stop' and a clear head nod for 'things are good'.
- Consider the kind of environment and the amount of time you might need to feel comfortable and enjoy yourself.
- Experiment with different activities, toys, clothes, language that may allow you to express or embody your gender identity in different ways.

A really fun and important part of sex is after you've had sex, you talk about what you liked and what you enjoyed and sometimes it can be so fun that you then have sex again.

– Genie, non-binary



¹Transfemme, transfemme.com.au

Not all relationships are healthy, and this can be true for everyone. However, there are specific ways stigma and discrimination can affect the relationships of trans and gender diverse people. This can mean we may feel obliged or pressured to meet the sexual expectations of our partners.

I'd often go out of my way to fulfil other people's expectations even if it wasn't what I felt comfortable with. I felt like I owed them something because of my trans-ness, because they accepted me despite my trans-ness. I felt some kind of obligation to them.

– Q, non-binary¹

Your partner/s should always respect and consider your boundaries and what you are comfortable with. You have the right to do only what feels good for you, your body and your gender identity.

You have the right to ask your partner/s to:

- Use language appropriate to your gender, e.g. using your correct pronouns, ensuring sexually intimate conversations are reflective of your gender identity.
- Refer to body parts using different language, e.g. using the term 'chest' instead of breasts, 'junk' instead of penis, 'front-hole' instead of vagina.
- Check in with you around how you want your body interacted with, especially as this may change at different times.
- Avoid touching, interacting with, or referring to certain parts of your body.
- Not put any pressure on you to do things you are not comfortable with.
- Educate themselves on trans and gender diverse identities and experiences.
- Not share information about your body, gender identity, or the sexual experiences you've had, without explicit consent.
- Agree on how you will communicate that things need to stop or slow down.

As a chronically ill person, there are times where I have to be like, "Ok my body is saying no, I have enjoyed this, but my body is tired." My muscles start shaking, my body is saying we've got to stop.

– Mx G, non-binary



Getting comfortable with sharing your boundaries around sex can take time and practice. Here are some examples of how you can communicate around sex and boundaries.

Think about how you might say similar things in your own words:

"I've been really enjoying ___ how about you?"

"I would like to try doing ___ how do you feel about that?"

"I didn't like when you did ___ can you do ___ instead?"

"I don't like this part of my body being touched, could you touch me here instead?"

"I would like you to check in with me first before you do ___ or touch this part of my body."

"I would prefer you using this term ___ when talking about this part of my body."

"I don't like it when you say ___ when you're complimenting me, could you say something like ___ instead?"

"Can we come up with some words and signals that we can use to communicate during sex?"

"When I do ___ or say ___ it means we need to stop and check in."

"I don't want to do that. Can we do ___ instead?"

"I'm not sure how I feel about this, we need to stop."

"I don't want to have a conversation about this yet. Can I let you know when I'm ready?"

In 2022 Victoria introduced new Affirmative Consent Laws that say everyone has a legal responsibility to get clear and enthusiastic consent before and during sexual activity. This can include a verbal 'yes', a gesture of encouragement – or reciprocating a move such as removing clothes. This consent must be ongoing, freely given, and respond to nonverbal cues such as body language and facial expression.

The laws also now prohibit removing or tampering with a condom without consent, taking intimate videos of someone without their consent, as well as distributing or threatening to distribute intimate images.

For more information on these new laws, visit www.shvic.org.au/for-you/sex-and-the-law/affirmative-sexual-consent



It might be important to figure out how you or your partner will notice if you're feeling uncomfortable – and need to change or stop what you're doing.

Are you:

- Feeling numb
- Feeling disconnected or disassociated from your body
- Feeling pain or discomfort
- Having the sensation that something feels 'off' or wrong
- Like you need to just 'get through' whatever is happening
- Feeling unable to speak or communicate
- Wanting to escape or leave the situation or get through it as quickly as possible
- Feeling dysphoric.

I always felt uncomfortable with that bottom region but for the first couple of years of my transition I was sleeping with people and using that area despite it making me feel uncomfortable. It took a date asking me if I liked having sex and if there was anything that made me feel uncomfortable to realise that I actually didn't like having sex.

– Nicole, trans woman¹

Remember that "no" is a full sentence. You do not need to justify or explain yourself if you need to pause, stop, or take a break from sex.

It's much better to make sure you are happy, and your partner's happy, and you both are going to have a good time – because ultimately sex is just something fun you do with your body, with somebody you trust.

– Zac, trans man

¹Transfemme, transfemme.com.au



Zoe Belle
Gender Collective

A trans and gender diverse led advocacy organisation
www.zbgc.org.au

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

SAY IT OUT LOUD

www.sayitoutloud.org.au

ACON's sexual, domestic and family violence website [Say It Out Loud](http://www.sayitoutloud.org.au) provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTQ+ community.

QLIFE

www.qlife.org.au

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

Phone: 1800 184 527

Opening hours:

3PM to midnight, every day
Telephone and web chat support service

TRANSHUB

www.transhub.org.au

TransHub is ACON's digital information and resource platform for all trans people, and their loved ones, allies and health providers.

TRANSFEMME - TIPS FOR MEN WHO DATE TRANS WOMEN

www.transfemme.com.au

This is a website made by the Zoe Belle Gender Collective with stories, tips, and resources to support healthier relationships between trans women or transfeminine people and cisgender men.