

Hi, I'm Jack, and I'm transgender. Let me take a guess at some of thoughts that might be running through your head right now. "Transgender? Wait, does that mean that they're actually a man or actually a woman?" "I wonder if he's had the surgery yet ... Oh, now I'm looking at his crotch. Look to the right, that's a safe place to look." "Yes, I knew it! No real man has hips like those." "My friend's daughter is transgender -- I wonder if they know each other." "Oh my gosh, he is so brave. I would totally support his right to use the men's bathroom. Wait, but how does he use the bathroom? How does he have sex?"

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OK, OK, let's stop those hypothetical questions before we get too close for my comfort. I mean, don't get me wrong, I did come here today to share my personal experiences being transgender, but I did not wake up this morning wanting to tell an entire audience about my sex life. Of course, that's the problem with being trans, right? People are pretty much always wondering how we have sex and what kind of equipment we're working with below the belt. Being trans is awkward.

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And not just because the gender I was assigned at birth mismatches the one I really am. Being trans is awkward because everyone else gets awkward when they're around me. People who support me and all other trans people wholeheartedly are often so scared to say to wrong thing, so embarrassed to not know what they think they should, that they never ask.

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Part of what was so nerve-racking about coming out as transgender was knowing that people wouldn't know what I meant. And when someone comes out as gay, people know what that means, but when you come out as trans, you have to face the misconceptions that will color other people's impressions of you even after you've educated them ... And you will have to educate them. When I came out, I wrote a 10-page encyclopedic document with a zip-file attachment of music and videos that I sent to every single person I came out to.

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(Laughter)

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And I kept it in my email signature for months afterwards, because you also don't ever stop coming out. I came out to the accountant helping me with my taxes and the TSA agents who didn't know which one of them should pat me down, the man or the woman. I mean, I just came out to everyone watching this.

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When I came out to my dad, to my great relief, he was totally cool with me being trans, but as soon as I started talking about physically transitioning, he freaked. And I quickly realized it was because he, like so many other people, think that physical transition means just one thing: the surgery. Now, listen, if there were one magical surgery that could turn me into a tall, muscular, societally perfect image of a man overnight, I'd sign up in a heartbeat. Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. There are dozens of different gender-affirming surgeries from chest surgeries to bottom surgeries to facial feminization and man-sculpting. Many trans people will only ever undergo one procedure in their lifetime, if that. Maybe because they don't personally feel the need but also because they're expensive, and health insurance is only beginning to cover them. Instead, the first step for a trans person seeking physical transition is usually hormone replacement therapy. Hormones are why I have a deeper voice and some sparse whiskers on my neck and a giant pimple on my chin. Basically, they put you through a second puberty ... it's a blast.

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(Laughter)

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Now, because our transitions are slower and steadier than historic misconceptions can lead people to believe, there can be some confusion about when to call someone by their new name and pronouns. There's no distinct point in physical transition at which a trans person becomes their true gender. As soon as they tell you their new name and pronouns, that's when you start using them. It can be difficult to make the change. You might slip up here and there; I've slipped up myself with other trans people. But I always think to myself, if we can change from calling Puff Daddy to P. Diddy, and if we apologize profusely when we've used the wrong gender pronoun for someone's pet cat -- I mean, I think we can make the same effort for the real humans in our lives.

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Now, there is no topic that makes other people more awkward about trans people than public bathrooms. Ah, the bathrooms -- the latest political flash point for LGBT opponents. Here's a fun fact about bathrooms: more US congressmen have been convicted of assaulting someone in a public bathroom than trans people have been.

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(Laughter)

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The truth is we trans people are so much more scared of you than you are of us. It's a huge point of discussion in trans communities about which bathroom to start using and when, so we don't attract attention that could lead to violence against us. I personally started using the men's room when I started getting confused and frightened looks in the women's room, even though I was petrified to start going into the men's room. And often we opt to just not go to the bathroom at all. A 2015 national survey of trans people found that eight percent of us had had a urinary tract infection in the past year as a result of avoiding restrooms. These bathroom bills aren't protecting anyone. All they're doing is ensuring that when trans people are assaulted in bathrooms, the law will no longer be on our side when we report it.

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Being trans means a daily onslaught of these misconceptions. And I have it pretty easy. I am a white, able-bodied guy sitting nearly at the peak of privilege mountain. For non-binary people, for trans women, for trans people of color, it is so much harder.

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Jackson Bird Ted Talk Transcript - How to talk (and listen) to transgender people

So I've given you a starter pack of trans knowledge that I hope will lead to more learning on your own. Talk to trans people. Listen to us. Amplify our voices. Take the heat off of us and educate those around you so we don't have to every time. Maybe someday, when I say, "Hi, I'm Jack, and I'm transgender," the only response I'll get is, "Hi, nice to meet you."

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Thank you.

06:07

(Applause)

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There are dozens of different gender-affirming surgeries from chest surgeries to bottom surgeries to facial feminization and man-sculpting.

An outline of the most common gender confirming procedures from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons

"16 Myths About Gender Confirmation Surgery" by Brynn Tannehill, Everyday Feminism

An excellent resource for nonbinary individuals considering physical transition from Micah at genderqueer.me

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Maybe because they don't personally feel the need, but also because they're expensive, and health insurance is only beginning to cover them.

A succinct explanation, with several additional resources, about why not all transgender people medically transition from Vox.

"Here's What Trans People Who Aren't Medically Transitioning Want You To Know," a quick read from BuzzFeed

From lack of insurance coverage to discriminatory gatekeeping and having to educate providers on our bodies, transgender people face infinite hurdles in accessing healthcare (whether transition-related or not). For more on these issues, visit GLAAD's transgender healthcare resource portal and the National Center for Transgender Equality's comprehensive outline of transgender rights and resources relating to health care.

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Note

Instead, the first step for a trans person seeking physical transition is usually hormone replacement therapy.

An overview of hormone replacement therapy for both transmasculine and transfeminine individuals from Revel & Riot.

"7 Things You Should Know If You're Considering Hormones For Your Transition" by Vera Papisova from Teen Vogue. This article also includes a ton of helpful links and resources.

A look at how five years of testosterone treatment, social transition, and other gender confirmation procedures affected one young man from Skylar Kergil.

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As soon as they tell you their new name and pronouns, that's when you start using them.

Tips for allies from GLAAD

"Why Pronouns Matter for Trans People," a video from BuzzFeed

"All About Pronouns," a video from Ash Hardell

Trans ally and CEO of Everyone Is Gay, Kristin Russo, talks authentically about the challenges of changing someone's pronouns and using gender-neutral pronouns..

"How to React After Accidentally Misgendering Someone" from Q Center

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Note

There is no topic that makes other people more awkward about trans people than public bathrooms.

Learn more about bathroom bills from GLAAD's Debunking the Bathroom Bill Myth.

Watch Kat Blaque's powerful educational video meets spoken word poem about transgender people and bathrooms.

I was fortunate enough to appear on the pilot episode of the Gotham Award-Nominated Series from Dylan Marron and SeriouslyTV, *Sitting in Bathrooms with Trans People*. The light-hearted series does a fantastic job of portraying trans people as ordinary people who just want to pee.

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More US congressmen have been convicted of assaulting someone in a public bathroom than trans people have been.

Media Matters did an in-depth report on popular accusations of transgender people assaulting people in bathrooms, debunking many popular stories about false incidents.

While it's possible a transgender person may have been convicted for assaulting someone in a bathroom by the time you watch this, there remain a number of United States congressmen who have already been convicted of just that.

It's important to note that states and municipalities with protections for transgender people in bathrooms have never seen "a rise in sexual violence or other public safety issues due to nondiscrimination laws," according to a coalition of sexual assault and domestic violence groups who formed in opposition to mounting discriminatory bathroom legislation in 2016. Indeed, transgender people are more often the ones in danger in public spaces, like bathrooms, with 64% of us experiencing sexual assault at some point in our lifetimes.

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A 2015 national survey of trans people found that eight percent of us had had a urinary tract infection in the past year.

This statistic comes from the National Center for Transgender Equality's most recent U.S. Transgender Survey.

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For non-binary people, for trans women, for trans people of color, it is so much harder.

Explaining nonbinary genders in a historical and scientific context from Riley J. Dennis.

An interview with Cecilia Gentili, an activist and trans woman of color.

TED Speaker Tiq Milan discusses the intersection of race and gender identity as a black trans man.

The New York Times' Transgender Lives: Your Stories series, which features profiles of dozens of transgender individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Trans women of color are the most at risk of being the victim of violent crimes. Here's a list of the women we've lost to violent crimes so far in 2017. You can honor their memory on Transgender Day of Remembrance in November of every year.