

I'm the mother of a seventeen-year-old boy who began questioning his gender identity at the beginning of high school.

at 14 my son announced that he was a trans woman and immediately wanted to start hormones and have top and bottom surgery. He informed us that we must immediately start using she and her pronouns and the preferred name he had chosen. It did not make sense that the little boy who overshared anything that popped into his adhd brain and had never showed interest in anything female nor wanted to dress up as a girl when he had the choice of putting on costumes in play, rewrote his childhood history saying and he was born in the wrong body but was too afraid to tell us.

As a parent you know your child. You watch their struggles and support them no matter what. You spend nights secretly crying in a closet or behind the bathroom door when you feel powerless to help them avoid the inevitable growing pains that they will experience. You look forward to watching them reach milestones and look forward to seeing the next chapter as it unfolds.

Education has always been very important in our household and the emphasis that we have put on the knowledge that you learned from school has never faltered. This meant that he was easily influenced by teachers and those we taught him were there to support and guide his growth.

Unfortunately middle school brought many growing pains. Over the next two years he would become suicidal, depressed, and anxious and would increasingly spend more time alone in his room. This was a boy who spent his entire childhood running and playing with a huge group of friends outside in the sunshine riding bikes, climbing trees and being a happy quirky kid. Then puberty hit.

What teenager has not felt uncomfortable in their own body. I know I did. Over the next two years he grew close to 3 inches a month. Can you imagine how uncomfortable you would feel in your own body growing at that rate? By the time he reached high school he was looking for answers as to why he did not feel like he belonged and why he felt so uncomfortable in his ever changing body. This triggered trauma related anxiety and early childhood ptsd stemming from

the fear that he would become his abusive biological father who he witnessed abusing me in his first 2 years of life. He felt different than the other boys. Unfortunately the internet told him if he felt uncomfortable in his own body he was trans.

Let that sink in....a confused 14 year old, dealing with mental health issues due to trauma, was allowed to self diagnose himself with gender dysphoria based on watching youtube videos. Therapist, Administrators and Coaches accepted his self diagnosis, of a dsm classified mental health disorder that required immediate medication and surgery based on nothing more than a 14 year olds opinion.

I rushed him to therapy mistakenly thinking the therapist would ask questions like "when did you start feeling like you were born in the wrong body?" Instead the therapist I entrusted to my son's mental health too ignored his diagnosable mental health issues in order to affirm his self diagnosed gender identity, and proceeded to advocate for immediate hormone therapy that would lead to sterility and irreversible medical procedures....my son 14.

I wasn't asked about his mental health history or what the goals of therapy were. I was asked if I wanted a dead son or a living daughter.

My son is a quirky, artistic, creative non-conforming, over sensitive, reactive, energetic kid, with severe ADHD. He has never "fit in" and has always longed to be accepted by his peers without knowing how to navigate the social environment. Being the researcher that I am, I immediately went to the internet trying to figure out what was going on because I knew deep down there was no way that my son was born in the wrong body and the scripted logic that was coming out of his mouth made no sense and was not based on any data or research. It was based on the youtube personality he was now following like a cult leader who offered videos and validation of this new identity along with the support and affirmation he all of a sudden was being showered with by those around him.

This boy who didn't fit in was all of a sudden accepted, praised and cheered for by his teachers, coaches and peers. We became the enemy standing in the way of his happiness and his true identity. We were not informed by the school when the counselor started pulling him out of class to join a support group, we were not told by the school when he changed his name and his

preferred pronouns. We had no way of parenting our child who we knew was suffering on the inside because we were dangerous and made him feel unsafe even though there has been nothing in his life to prove that was the case. I was being asked to sentence my son to a life where he could never be a fully functioning adult by allowing him to take off label medication that would sterilize him and make it impossible for him to have a fulfilling sexual life as an adult.

Parental authority allows us to guide our children through the challenges they will face. This authority was taken away and my son was not given a chance to figure out the underlying emotional causes of his internal conflict and was promised a magic solution to real problems. His mental health was ignored in lieu of a quick fix that in reality fixes nothing on the inside which is where the problem lives. When the euphoria of the drugs and endorphins from surgery subside they are still the same person on the inside with the same problems only now they are only a shell of themselves having cut off body parts in a desperate search to cut out the emotional turmoil they are experiencing on the inside.