



EXPLORING GENDER: FIRST STEPS

THE GENDER
CENTRE
INC

THE FOUR KEY AREAS TO INSIGHT

Exploring who you are can be a rewarding journey. Where to start or what to do next can feel overwhelming.

THIS IS WHERE THE GENDER CENTRE CAN HELP.

The Gender Centre is committed to providing the resources and information that will enable people exploring their gender to make informed choices. No two people's experiences are the same; everyone's story is different. Figuring out which steps to take next can be difficult.

FIRST STEPS

That is why we developed the **4 KEY AREAS TO INSIGHT TOOLKIT**. A guide to help you find the right resources, to develop insights into your identity and identify which actions you may want to take.

YOUR GENDER JOURNEY

All journeys are different but we all start with questions. This toolkit isn't designed to give you answers, but helps give you a way to find your own answers.

Each of the our key areas, **DISCOVERING**, **DEVELOPING**, **CONNECTING**, and **INSIGHT** lead to the next. Each step will help you to figure out what information you need, which feelings you need to process, and where to find the support you need.

GETTING STARTED

The Gender Centre uses the Informed Consent Model (ICM). That means you don't need to undergo a mental health assessment or be referred to a mental health specialist to begin exploring your gender.

This also means working with your health care professional to provide the best health care plan to facilitate your journey.

The role of Informed Consent is not to assess but to facilitate thoughtful decision-making. The ICM ensures that decisions are not made in haste without appropriate knowledge and forethought, but ensures your own authority over your own experiences¹.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

Becoming who you are doesn't happen all at once. Like anything in life it's a process; one that has many steps and paths. The 4 Key Areas toolkit is designed to help you find the point you are in your

journey. You may have already gone through one of, or all of these areas on your own, and this toolkit is built to help you find the next step.

I. DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS:

At this stage you have questions. You may have just started to ask these questions of yourself, or maybe you've been asking questions for a while but aren't sure what to do or who to ask.

These questions will continue throughout the process as you use these tools, but once you feel it is time to address your questions you know you are ready to begin.

I AM READY TO DO SOMETHING

Only question is what are you actually ready to do? What options are available to you? DEVELOPING a plan means it's time to enter the next key area.

2. DEVELOPING

WHAT CAN I DO?

This step is all about gathering resources. Resources can be written, like a book or an article, but can also be a person or an organisation. You can develop a

plan based on what resources you need. Would you like to speak with someone or would you rather read about it? It could of course be both.

TALK TO MY CHEER SUPPORTERS

There are plenty of groups both online and in person that offer support. The Gender Centre runs support groups and you will often find schools and community centre-run groups. It's always a good idea to check out what's in your local area. How? Community noticeboards, websites and your local library.

DO MY OWN INFO GATHERING

There is a lot of information out there, so you need to be careful when looking for resources. People sharing their own experiences can be good but keep in mind everyone's experience is different. Remember not all the information on the internet is current. International websites may have information that is not culturally or legally relevant to someone in Australia. The Gender Centre website can be a good place to start finding current and relevant information.

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to someone who is trained in how to explore gender. A lot of counsellors and psychologists require referrals so once you have an idea of who you want to see, visiting a GP (General Practitioner) is most likely your first move. Keep in mind some GPs may have experience with gender and have advice as well, but some may not. Contacting the Gender Centre before your GP appointment maybe helpful.

MY CULTURAL CHECK-IN

Culture and community is an important part of life. When seeking information and support on your journey consider what resources exist within your culture. You may not know of any but that doesn't mean it don't exist. If it's Safe to enquire finding cultural and community support is worth looking into.

When finding resources, consider whether the source takes into account your cultural perspective. Yes you want to find resources and people who know about exploring identity, but it can be just as important that they are inclusive and culturally relevant to you.

3. CONNECTING

You've done your research and you know your options. You may feel after reading and researching that you want to ask more questions of yourself. You may feel it is time to see someone and to move towards **CONNECTING**.

MAKE SURE YOU SHOW UP

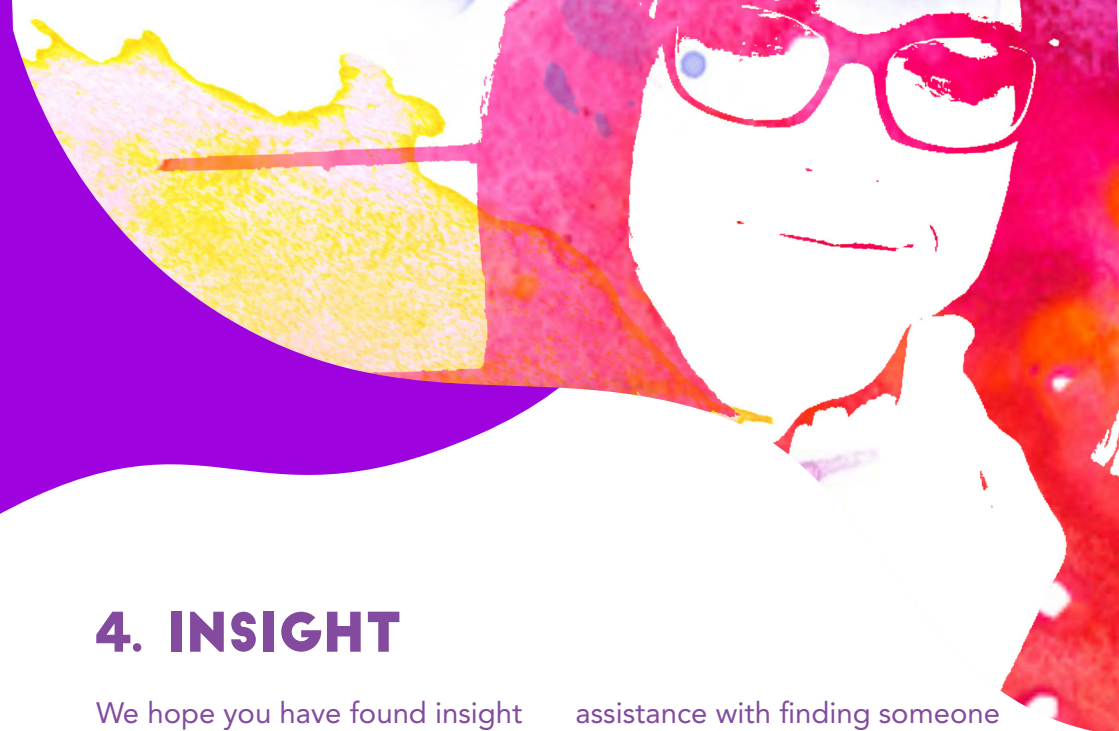
It's important you go to your appointments. Whether you do or don't need to take steps to affirm your gender, following through on appointments will help you on your journey. Make the promise to yourself to give it a go.

Life frequently gets in the way of our best intentions, and medical professionals understand this too. Remember, it is important to call and cancel with as much notice as you can to avoid cancellation fees.

COMMITTING TO ACTION

You know what you're ready to do, now its time to book it in so you are motivated to go. That can look like:

- **Getting a referral to speak to a health professional.**
- **Making an appointment**
- **Confirming some time to talk to your cheer support.**



4. INSIGHT

We hope you have found insight through this process and that these insights give rise to new questions. If so, you can start the **FOUR KEY AREAS TO INSIGHT** again and work to gain new insights to these new questions.

Through these insights you may have discovered that your gender questions have resulted from other areas of your life that need more attention. This toolkit can be used to work through these areas too. If at any time you need

assistance with finding someone to speak to about other insights, the Gender Centre can link you to the help you need.

You may feel with these insights you have found you are interested in taking steps to live as your authentic self. If so, it is suggested that you move on to our booklet about transitioning, *Being Your Authentic Self*, and our resource on informed consent around transitioning.

NOTES:

Ashley, F. (2019). Gatekeeping hormone replacement therapy for transgender patients is dehumanising. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. DOI: 10.1136/medethics-2018-105293.

CONNECT WITH US

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities in NSW which enhance the ability of people exploring their gender identity to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to gender explorers, their partners, family and friends in NSW. We provide:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
VICTIM OF CRIME ADVOCACY
YOUTH AND FAMILY SUPPORT
INFORMATION AND REFERRALS
COUNSELLING
ADVOCACY
GROUPS
ACCOMMODATION
STREET OUTREACH
CASE MANAGEMENT
SPEECH PATHOLOGY
NEEDLE SYRINGE PROGRAM
HIV AND HEP C TESTING (DBS)

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