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Dear Fifteen Year-old Me

There are Many Like You, Boys and Girls, Born With the Wrong-Sexed Bodies

by Zoe Brain from her [A.E. Brain Blog](#) 

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Zoe Brain

Dear fifteen year-old me,

I can do nothing for you, the fifteen-year-old girl that I was, silently sobbing in your bedroom. Back when you are, in 1973, I know your parents wouldn't understand. I know from here in 2012 (though you don't, and perhaps that's for the best) that if you let your secret out, the standard treatment in your time is electroshock therapy, sometimes even lobotomy, cutting out pieces of your brain, so best keep quiet.

I can do nothing for you. But I can do something for all the girls like you that exist in my time. Knowing me, knowing you, the girl I was, I think that will make you smile amidst your tears. It's how I soothe the hurt that you're feeling, easing the path of others.

***Dear fifteen-year-old me,
feeling so isolated and alone,
back in 1973 you don't know
that there are many like you.***

And you know what? It will take a long time I'm afraid, but you'll live happily ever after too, as they will. We have a better understanding now. We have something called the Internet, linking all the computers in the world - and every home has at least one now - to share information.

The surgery is far better, the knowledge of hormones more extensive. We can't give girls like you the ability to have babies, not yet, but that's coming too. Too late for you - for us - but perhaps not too late for them.

It's no easier for other girls at fifteen than it is for you, back in 1973, stuck with a male body that feels so terribly, fundamentally WRONG. But there is hope for them, as there doesn't appear to be for you, when you are. Well, after living for so many years, hoping even when there is no hope, you get to win anyway, to be yourself. You will learn what the word 'happiness' means. It will be better than you can imagine, better than your wildest dreams. Against all the odds, you get to live happily ever after.

You have many years of hell in front of you. Far too many. But you get out anyway.

Today, in 2012, girls like you don't have to endure nearly so long. If they can endure, just for another thousand days, there will be help available for them. No child should have to endure what you are destined to endure, but you get through it. No child should have to endure even a thousand days of it, nor a thousand seconds for that matter. They do have to though, at the moment. It's changing, getting better, and I think in my - in our - lifetime, we'll see an end to it. The issue will be recognised earlier, and social acceptance of the obvious treatment will become unremarkable. That day is not here yet, which is why we, you and I, have to help them.

You and I just have to show the girls of 2012 who are your age, that there is hope. That it does get better, and by the time they're twenty-five, their lives will be not much different from other girls their age.

That's not some impossible dream, not just a possibility, it's an inevitability, if they just hang on. Meanwhile, they must lay the foundations of their future life, do well at school, be ready to make a fantastic success of life, and not fall into the traps of drug abuse or throwing away a life that at the moment seems worthless. We must show them that they must plan ahead, for the better times to come for them.

They may end up marrying boys, and having a family together. Or marrying girls for that matter - we've come a long way in understanding sexuality since 1973, and same-sex partnerships, while unusual, aren't regarded as unthinkable as they are when you are.

Dear fifteen-year-old me, feeling so isolated and alone, back in 1973 you don't know that there are many like you. Boys and girls, born with the wrong sexed bodies. Yes, there are boys too, born with female anatomy, and it's just as horrid for them as it is for girls born with male anatomy. Now in 2012, we do know though, and are doing something about it. There's still plenty of bullying (and worse than bullying) in schools, and not just from other kids. That's getting better though too. The trouble is, that's little consolation for all the fifteen-year-old boys and girls subject to it today in 2012, so we have to show them that others have made it, and they can too. That it gets better, and not in ten or twenty years, but in just a few. That they should be busy preparing for that day.

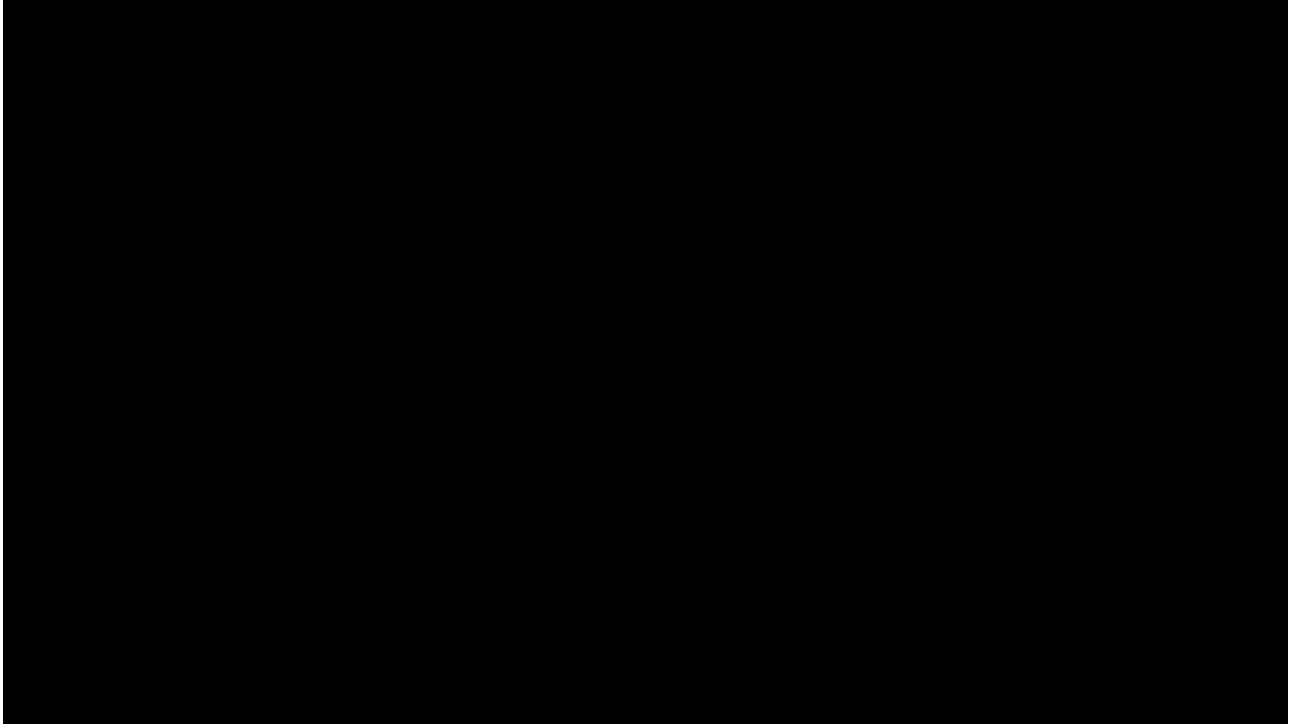
I hope I've made you smile, dear fifteen-year-old me. You get to be quite a woman, you know? You use the pain you're feeling now as an energy, to help others just like you, transmuting it into compassion.

Writing letters like this one.

Zoe Brain

Zoe's profile on her [award-winning blog](#) reads "Actually, I am a Rocket Scientist. Also hormonally odd (my blood has 46xy chromosomes anyway) and for most of my life, I looked male, and lived as one, trying to be the "best man a gal could be". Anyway, in May 2005 that started changing naturally for reasons still unclear, and I'm now Zoe, not Alan - happier and more relaxed not to have to pretend any more.

Her blog, simply titled: [A.E. Brain](#) has been archived by the Australian National Library and features topics like brains, current events, feminism, space, software, science, and a wealth of information about her personal life, her transition, politics and religion, often with a transgender flavour and transgender human rights.



Video courtesy of [A.B.C.'s Hungry Beast](#) program and YouTube.

In 2010, Zoe was featured on the [A.B.C.'s Hungry Beast](#) program, and as [The Star Observer](#) newspaper reports: "Now *Hungry Beast* is turning its attention to telling the story of two intersex people. The [A.B.C.'s](#) new part-current affairs, part-sketch show speaks to Zoe Brain, a fifty-one-year-old aerospace engineer, who was born male. At the age of 47, her body suddenly changed to female over a three-month period. The *Hungry Beast* team follows Brain's meeting with twenty-three-year-old graphic designer Natalie Kirk, who was born with female anatomy except for under-developed ovaries. 'For some people it's just really hard to imagine anything but male and female. It's just that some people aren't either,' Kirk says. The show looks at the secrecy intersex people are often forced into, despite one in 100 people being intersex.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.