

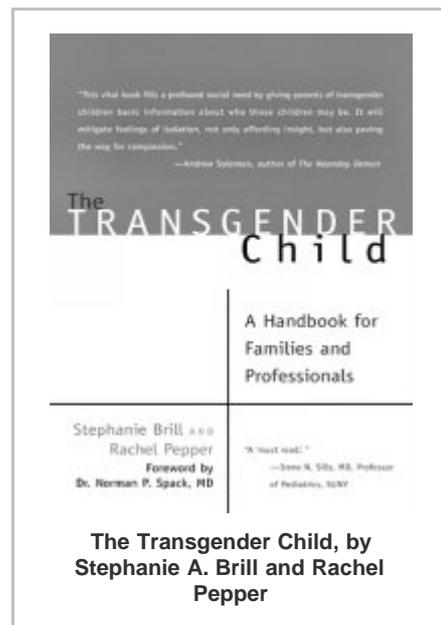
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Book Review: The Transgender Child

A Handbook for Families and Professionals

Reviewed by Elizabeth Anne Riley

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The Transgendered Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals

by Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel
Pepper
Published by Wakefield Press, Kent
Town (2008)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1573443180

Brill and Pepper have successfully conveyed the flexibility and individual approach required of professionals in supporting each family uniquely ...

In *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*, Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper have successfully created a guidebook for any family with a gender-variant child and basic information for professionals who find themselves working with gender-variant children and/or their families.

In helping parents comprehend the territory that is "having or raising a transgender child", Brill and Pepper communicate, at the very least, how to handle the "coalface" issues that families have to deal with, while demonstrating understanding, respect and compassion for all involved.

The book starts with a brief background and explanation of gender, societal assumptions and diversity, challenging the status quo and affirming parents' views and queries about

having to manage a situation for which they have no precedent or preparation.

Brill and Pepper have successfully conveyed the flexibility and individual approach required of professionals in supporting each family uniquely, given differing circumstances, beliefs, dynamics and community.

The book answers parents' questions about clothes, behaviour, toys, going out, bathrooms, religion and more, not necessarily in depth, but with enough information for parents to be confident that they are acting in the best interests of their children.

The next stage describes how to navigate the process of transition, dealing with disclosure and family reactions. The authors provide arguments for and against who to disclose to and whether or not to let the child determine the limitations of exposure. They offer clear guidelines in dealing with adversarial situations, talking to friends and handling strangers as well as providing information on the realities of choosing friends who will provide a healthy environment so that the child can develop and thrive.

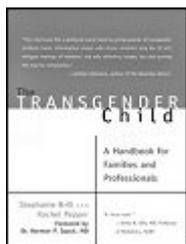
Although the book is United States based, the information about educating the transgendered child and finding the right school provides parents with some ideas about school policies, bullying and practices that have proved beneficial for parents and their children. Practical advice regarding training at the schools and appropriate target audiences for that training are also provided. The vital necessity of teaching teachers and the school system to cope with diversity rather than simply focussing on the individual child is stressed, in order to protect the privacy of individuals.

Finally, the book offers guidance on medical issues, how to deal with events which lead to the emergency department, and practical information on issues around delaying puberty and the use of hormone blockers.

When I managed to buy a copy of this book shortly after its release in 2008, I admit I was initially disappointed, as the book contains virtually no references for extended reading. Nonetheless, Brill and Pepper have provided a long-awaited book that has been invaluable in providing parents with support, if only by supplying another voice apart from the counsellor's, and providing a handy reference guide for consultation day by day.

Those who read *Polare* attentively and, better still, remember what they read, will have noted that this book was reviewed by Tracie O'Keefe in *Polare* a year ago (issue 79). It had slipped my mind, and my only excuse is my advanced age [dribble, cough, wheeze]. When I looked at both reviews, however, I realised that they are written from different points of view, Elizabeth's from the viewpoint of a counsellor and Tracie's from that of a clinician. I think it is valuable to have both points of view presented by two wise women (neither of them in any way blind) exploring different aspects of the elephant-in-the-room we call transgendered youth. - Editor

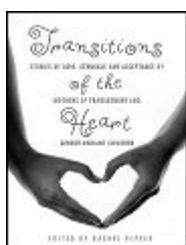
Books by Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper



The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals
Author: Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper
Publisher: Cleis Press (2008)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1573443180

From Amazon Books: This comprehensive first of its kind guidebook explores the unique challenges that thousands of families face every day raising their children in every city and state. Through extensive research and interviews, as well as years of experience working in the field, the authors cover gender variance from birth through college. What do you do when your toddler daughter's first sentence is that she's a boy? What will happen when your preschool son insists on

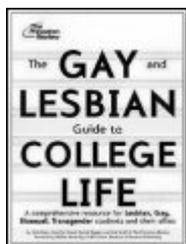
wearing a dress to school? Is this ever just a phase? How can you explain this to your neighbours and family? How can parents advocate for their children in elementary schools? What are the current laws on the rights of transgender children? What do doctors specializing in gender variant children recommend? What do the therapists say? What advice do other families who have trans kids have? What about hormone blockers and surgery? What issues should your college-bound trans child be thinking about when selecting a school? How can I best raise my gender variant or transgender child with love and compassion, even when I barely understand the issues ahead of us? And what is gender, anyway? These questions and more are answered in this book offering a deeper understanding of gender variant and transgender children and teens.



Transitions of the Heart: Stories of Love, Struggle and Acceptance by Mothers of Transgender and Gender Variant Children
Author: Rachel Pepper
Publisher: Cleis Press (2012)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1573447881

From Amazon Books: *Transitions of the Heart* is the first collection to ever invite mothers of transgender and gender variant children of all ages to tell their own stories about their child's gender transition. Often "transitioning" socially and emotionally alongside their child but rarely given a voice in the experience, mothers hold the key to familial and societal understanding of

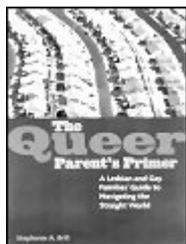
gender difference. Sharing stories of love, struggle, and acceptance, this collection of mother's voices, representing a diversity of backgrounds and sexual orientations, affirms the experience of those who have raised and are currently raising transgender and gender variant children between the ages of five and fifty. Edited by Rachel Pepper, a gender specialist and co-author of the acclaimed book *The Transgender Child*, *Transitions of the Heart* will prove an invaluable resource for parents coming to terms with a child's gender variance or transition.



The Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life: A Comprehensive Resource for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students and Their Allies
Author: Rachel Pepper, John C. Baez and Jennifer Howd
Publisher: Princeton Review (2007)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0375766237

From Amazon Books: Featuring advice from students and administrators at more than seventy of the nation's top colleges, the *Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life* lets you know how to thrive on campus as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning student.

Including tons of student testimonials and dozens of parent tips, the *Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life* offers no-nonsense guidance to L.G.B.T. students, their families, and allies on how to make the most of their college experience. Learn how you can find an L.G.B.T.-friendly school; evaluate administrative policies related to L.G.B.T. student life; deal with homo/bi/transphobia on campus; participate in L.G.B.T. student activism; get support for your health and safety needs and fully integrate yourself into the campus community



The Queer Parent's Primer: A Lesbian and Gay Families' Guide to Navigating the Straight World
Author: Stephanie A. Brill
Publisher: New Harbinger Publications (2001)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1572242265

From Amazon Books: Straight talk for Gay parents - a practical guide to parenting challenges: Includes examples and interactive exercises to help you through conflicts, define and protect your family, and celebrate and nourish a proud and loving household. Covers the practical realities of laying a foundation for healthy parenting, coming out once and for all, finding culturally sensitive schools, and making decisions about spirituality and family celebrations. Also includes a section on

special concerns of single parents, the complications of breaking up, and the legal concerns of protecting your family. The author is both parenting educator and a lesbian mother. Today, more and more gays and lesbians are choosing to reinvent what family means by making up their own minds how they would like to go about having children and raising them. The practical challenges these families face are enormous, including the all-too-familiar consequences of a society-wide disconnect that insists on equating 'family values' with various forms of homophobic intolerance. *The Queer Parent's Primer* is an empathetic guide that offers gay and lesbian parents real-life parenting solutions to the many practical challenges they face.

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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.