

## **The Autism Spectrum and Gender Dysphoria**

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Being on the autism spectrum (AS) influence's individual's lives in a variety of ways; this is one reason we think of autism as a spectrum. Gender and sexuality also lie along and across a spectrum of varying experience. There is minimal research to date on the connections between autism, sexuality and gender variance, but, this is a growing area of concern and one that needs attention. AS Individuals are 7 times more likely to live with conflicting gender and sexuality issues; 20% will experience gender dysphoria (compared to 1% of the typical population) and, in the US '....a staggering 41 percent of transgender people have attempted to commit suicide.....'. In autism how do we recognize gender variance? How can we tell if gender and sexuality are issues of a permanent nature or are aspects of a special interest? What if these are not issues for the individual at all or are the result of an obsessive compulsive disorder? How do we tell the difference and what are the best ways to educate, support and tap into resources for families living with autism?

This presentation aims to explore the above with reference to the latest research, personal story and anecdotal accounts.