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Transgender Trauma: A Teenage Detransitioner's First-Hand

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Transgender Trauma: A Teenage Detransitioner's First-Hand Account

Christopher H. Rosik^{1,2}

¹*Link Care Foundation*

²*Fresno Pacific University*

Jane (not her real name) is a 15-year-old girl who recently detransitioned after several years of pursuing a transgender identity. She expressed a desire to her mother, Kim (also a pseudonym), to share her story with a larger audience and thereby in some way redeem the trauma she has experienced in her encounter with transgender ideology. Since her family was known to me, she reached out through her mother to see if there was a way I could communicate her experiences to others, and the idea for this interview and its placement in the journal was borne. Jane provided this interview, along with her mother's input, in mid-July of 2024.

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CR: Jane, thank you for your desire to tell your story and thank you, Kim, for your willingness as her mother to allow her to share her story with our readers. Without giving specific locations, could you tell us a little about your life prior to the events of Jane identifying as a boy?

JANE: I am the first-born of an intact family and have one younger brother. I went to public school during the week and church on the weekends. As a little kid, I was into Disney princesses and dolphins. As I got

older, I discovered anime and Greek mythology. I grew up with friends who were manipulative and struggled to find good people.

KIM: She was raised in a Christian household with very involved maternal grandparents. She was always very "girly." As a little girl, she loved to dress up as a princess, watch movies about princesses, talk about her future wedding, paint her nails, etc. In the fourth grade, she began to be bullied publicly by her best friend, which

Christopher H. Rosik is a licensed California psychologist who works and the Link Care Foundation in Fresno, California. He is also a clinical faculty member at Fresno Pacific University. Dr. Rosik is a Past-President of the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity and currently serves as the editor for the *Journal of Human Sexuality*.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Christopher H. Rosik, 1734 W Shaw Ave., Fresno, CA 93711. Email: christopherrosik@linkcare.org

led to the dissolution of that friendship. Because this friend had bullied her publicly, not too many girls wanted to take a chance on having their own reputation sullied by hanging out with her. This limited her to just about four female friends. Two at school and two at church. Three out of the four were all heavily impacted by LGBT online information. At the end of Jane's fourth grade year, the pandemic started, isolating her even more. She would FaceTime with these friends who continued to educate her on trans and gay ideology.

CR: I understand that your journey into LGBT+ identities began during the pandemic lockdowns. How old were you at that time? During this time, what was life like for you and what things led you into alternate sexual and gender identities?

JANE: YouTube and fan fictions. I would watch anime and then I would want to see certain couples in fan fictions. But the fan fictions were almost always homosexual. At first, I was pairing hetero couples, but when influenced by the constant same sex couples I began to think the homosexual couples made more sense. All of my friends only "shipped" the gay couples. If I put a hetero couple together my friends would have a negative reaction. I began to think these alternate identities are more common than they are.

KIM: Jane was 10 when the pandemic hit, but I don't think she learned of LGBT issues until after she turned 11.

CR: What was the impact of this in terms of your emotional and relational health, including your relationship with your parents? Was your school performance negatively affected as well?

JANE: The more I got into the LGBT stuff, the more I started resenting my parents and thinking they were abusive. I knew they wouldn't support me in being LGBT, so I

began to look at past experiences with my parents and twist the truth or exaggerate to make myself the victim. I held a lot of grudges. Forgiveness is not really a thing for those outside of the community. It's an "us versus them". I just didn't want to be around people as much. I stayed up in my room all day consuming content that was isolating me and convincing me that I was part of the LGBT community. I began to not care about school, but I think that was the depression.

KIM: It's hard to differentiate between how much her anxiety and depression caused her to question her gender and sexuality or if her questioning affected her identity led to more anxiety. My guess is that even without learning this ideology she would have still suffered with her mental health during puberty. However, I don't think she would have been so easily influenced had she not been depressed and anxious and dealing with the trauma of being bullied. She became more reclusive, had flat affect, and did not engage with the family as much as she had previously. Her social identity—cutting her hair short and wearing big baggy clothes—only further isolated her from finding healthy friends at her new school. Clearly our online parental controls were no match for what she was finding online.

CR: How did your thinking about yourself, your parents, and others change from before to after you began to identify as LGBT+?

JANE: Looking back, I realize I was really judgmental toward everyone who wasn't part of the community. I was angry all the time and I took it out on my family and friends. Being bullied made me feel like a victim "no one understands me" and that became an identity. It's hard to be happy when you're always the victim and looking for proof that you're the victim. I still struggle with that a bit, and I am working on

that with my therapist. I am becoming more honest with myself which has been pretty hard to realize I'm not perfect.

CR: You told me you were also bullied a lot at school. Did this occur prior to identifying as LGBT+ or after identifying or both?

JANE: The bullying at public school started before. I started Christian school with an LGBT identity and was called the f slur, gay girl, etc. The bullying at public school made me believe I was different and then I just adopted a different identity, making the bullying worse. It was a cycle. If I would've been my true self, I may not have been bullied.

KIM: Prior. She learned how terrible it can be to be a preteen girl and envied how the boys related to each other during recess.

CR: Your parents obviously were very concerned as all this was going on and took you both to a therapist and to the Amen Clinic. Were these good experiences for you? Did the therapy allow you to consider the possibility you might not be a boy, or were you encouraged to adopt a transgender identity?

JANE: I didn't tell my therapist about my identity until my parents found out. I had already been in therapy for a year. I had a feeling she wouldn't agree with me and would disrupt my fantasy. That is also why I didn't tell my parents. I was always questioning if my new identity was true. I couldn't voice any doubts out loud. When I questioned my identity online and searched for answers what I got was, "If you wonder if you're gay, you're gay." I was so committed to the LGBT path I didn't want any more confusion, so I didn't tell any adults. When I finally told my therapist I had a girlfriend, she wasn't judgy, but she asked a lot of questions. Her questions helped me realize that I wasn't actually attracted to my

girlfriend, and I hadn't been attracted to anyone yet.

CR: A lot of trans-identified youth and their parents are told that unless the child is allowed to at least socially transition, they will be at a high risk of suicide. Tell us about any experience you had with self-harm and suicidal thoughts? If you had such thoughts and impulses, why do you think you struggled with them? Did transitioning reduce or increase these feelings?

JANE: Transitioning was harmful in the way that it continued my delusions. I think I self-harmed regardless of my trans identity. I was just miserable from depression and that is why I self-harmed. Becoming trans is a form of dissociation. It was a break from my miserable life to create a new identity that had more power. The new identity was a victim. And a victim holds the power in our current culture. I was falsely empowered.

CR: There was a culminating event in this journey that finally turned the tide and led you to detransition. Could you share the events leading up to and after your trip to the hospital ER and what was critical in your decision to re-identify as a girl?

JANE: I took a handful of pills when my parents discovered what I was doing online. I had been reading erotica, both homo and hetero. While in the hospital I started thinking how much of this LGBT stuff has been bad for me. I felt gross. Knowing my parents knew about it made me wonder if they thought I was gross. I felt embarrassed. I asked my mom—why do I feel relieved when people call me he/him? My mom said that maybe I enjoyed taking a break from being a girl since my reality was so hard. I had created an alter ego that I could go to and hide. When she said that, it clicked, and I came to terms with what I

had been wondering for so long. It wasn't easy to realize I was wrong. I felt stupid. I asked my mom to remind me that I am a girl, and she showed my photos from when I was little. An hour after my revelation, we went to Target for female clothing.

KIM: My husband and I hugged and sighed with relief. We had suspicions that she had socially transitioned. That Target trip was one of the best moments of my life. I got my Jane back.

CR: Some skeptics would say that you only detransitioned due to pressure from your family. How would you respond to that accusation?

JANE: I wasn't pressured at all by my family. I could've said "no" to my mom's suggestion and she would have still loved me. But she knew who I really am. They didn't pressure me because they didn't even know. My parents stayed firm about who they knew me to be and didn't try to persuade me. They just reflected reality to me. They would have never called me by a different name because they would know that is not really me.

CR: What's it been like for you since you detransitioned? How has your life changed?

JANE: I've been happier. I've been able to wear dresses without feeling ashamed or uncomfortable. I have been able to let myself be happy by the things that always made me happy. Adopting a trans identity made me lose a few important years of being

a girl. I can't get that time back. I have done my best to make up for lost time by taking advantage of my parents and grandma's generosity of buying new clothes. They say they don't mind. We were all a bit trigger happy with our purchases. I'm closer with my friends now that I am my real self. I am less demanding of them. I have apologized to them for forcing them to call me a different name. I no longer feel like a victim except when I think of how LGBT ideology hurt me. I am less angry these days.

CR: What guidance would you give to youth struggling with these issues as you once did? What advice would you give to parents of young people who have adopted a transgender identity?

JANE: Kids—allow yourself to question but if you have a bad feeling about something don't try to stifle it because you feel judgmental or homophobic/transphobic. Trust your gut. Being heterosexual doesn't mean you're a bigot. Be mindful of what you consume online. If you find yourself questioning your identity it's a good idea to get offline. Parents—don't take the phone away. Don't be forceful because they will just resent you. Be kind and lead them the best you can. Ask them questions. The questions my mom asked me are the questions I didn't allow myself to ask myself.

KIM: Do not let your kids have a phone before age 14. At all. It is my biggest regret.