



Preparing to see your Doctor or Psychiatrist regarding Transition

Preparing to see your primary care physician or a psychiatrist/therapist about Gender Identity issues can be anxiety provoking, to say the least. Those health care providers hold a lot of power in determining whether we get a prescription for hormones, or a support letter stating our readiness for surgery. We know as trans people that the future of our lives depends on how this stranger interprets our words, our motivations, our actions, and whether or not they believe that we are making good decisions for ourselves. The following exploratory questions are intended to give you a guideline of what questions to expect from your health care provider, to understand the underlying point of their questions, and to answer the questions for yourself to have a better understanding of where you need to further develop in order to be ready for transition.

The Question	The Underlying Question	Demonstrating Readiness
1. When did you realize you were trans?	<p>“How much thought have you given this?”</p> <p>They want to know that you didn't just decide this overnight, or in the last week.</p>	<p>You can demonstrate this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by the length of time you've had these feelings about yourself • by the length of time you've been "cross-living" or "cross-dressing" • by the level of knowledge you have about the side-effects of hormones and impact of surgeries • by how many people you've come out to • by attending Gender Journeys or other trans support groups • by seeing a therapist around these issues. <p>These are just some of the many number of other ways you can show that this isn't just a passing fancy for you.</p>
2. What do you think your life will be like during this transition period?	<p>“Are you prepared for the challenges that will arise during transition?”</p> <p>They want to know you have a realistic impression of what will change and what won't.</p>	<p>You can demonstrate your grip on reality by describing contingency plans for how to cope with the problems that could come in terms of employment, schooling, family, relationships, and finances. You can also discuss support systems you have in place, and financial planning you've done to prepare for any surgeries you might want.</p>

<p>3. Can you provide informed consent?</p>	<p>“Do you understand the consequences of your actions and can you make decisions with that knowledge?”</p> <p>This question is about determining if you are legally capable of making medical decisions for yourself.</p>	<p>Show you are able to fully understand the risks and benefits of the medical aspects of transition, that you've done your homework. Talk for yourself, rather than letting a partner talk for you. Always show up for appointments sober. Stay on your prescribed medications.</p>
<p>4. Are you currently suffering from depression and anxiety?</p>	<p>“Are you healthy enough to withstand the emotional difficulties of transition?”</p> <p>This question relates to wanting to know you have an emotional toolkit to get through the trials and tribulations of transition.</p>	<p>We can be prepared and make all the contingency plans you want, but if you suffer from untreated depression, or untreated anxiety attacks, it might be a bad time to transition. Demonstrate readiness by pursuing treatment for depressive and anxiety disorders, and by sharing experiences of therapeutic or counseling relationships.</p>

These are the questions/answers that will shape a doctor's sense of your "readiness". Some of these things might seem like none of their business, and we'd have to agree with you, but doctors are very touchy about prescribing hormones, and psychiatrists might feel the same about providing support letters for surgery. They see it as a huge step, and they often want to make sure that you're not making these incredible life changes on a whim because often they fear that they could be contributing to someone making a huge mistake. Pretty much all the questions you might be asked will relate to this one issue. And they are even more cautious with youth. (anyone under 25, for example) They often feel that youth are more vulnerable to "trends", and that youth may not yet have as clear a sense of who they really are. Show them how wrong they are by being knowledgeable about transition, by having done your homework, by demonstrating you're getting significant supports, and by being able to clearly articulate why transition is right for you!!!!

Good luck!