

GENDER DISAPPOINTMENT



What is GD?

Gender Disappointment (GD) can be defined as the complex emotional reaction to learning the sex of a baby.

- *It is NOT a reaction to the baby itself.*
- *These reactions often include very valid feelings of disappointment, pain, loss, grief, loss of control and a strong hope for a certain gender.*
- *They exist WITH feelings of appreciation for the baby and children we already have.*

Experiences range in severity from mild and fleeting senses of 'too bad' to devastating experiences of depression, thoughts of terminating the pregnancy or suicide.



SYMPTOMS CAN INCLUDE:

- *Depression.*
- *Something being wrong.*
- *Deep longing.*
- *Out of control.*
- *Confusion.*
- *Hope.*
- *Fear of Judgement.*
- *Crushing grief/loss.*
- *Anger.*
- *Envy.*
- *Isolation.*
- *Lonliness.*
- *Sadness (over what you don't have, not over what you do).*
- *Roller Coaster of emotion.*
- *Missing out on something.*



Feeling rules are ideas about how we SHOULD feel in a given situation. Feeling rules about pregnancy and having a baby are often focused on the baby's health. If you don't have feelings that match these rules...such as "I'm happy, in love with my baby, grateful" ...then there is a strong (and often valid) fear that people will see our feelings as wrong or deviant. We can also see our own feelings this way. As a result, we can be uncomfortable sharing our experiences of GD and feel shame and guilt for having these feelings. We might start to feel like 'terrible mothers' or 'terrible fathers'. The silence can be very isolating and lonely.

Common for People who feel GD

- **Disclosure:** *it helps to find a safe place where you can talk about how you feel and not feel judged.*
- **It is the Death of a Dream:** *the grief and mourning can be intense.*
- **Triggers** *can happen often and usually when gender is discussed and when we are exposed to a baby with our dream gender.*
- *There is a strong urge to find a "cure" - which is to have a baby with the dream gender, and fear that without this, the feelings will persist.*



WHY ME?

- *People who feel GD have often held a picture of the family they want for a long time. They've lived with this 'dream family' for many years and have built a future for themselves based on this dream. Facing a different reality can be very difficult.*
- *We live in a world where gender stereotypes exist and it is hard not to believe that a sex of a baby will mean that they will hold certain characteristics. We often want a certain sex in a baby because what we really want are these characteristics, even though we logically understand that not all girls like dolls and not all boys like sports.*
- *We might have a fear of relating to a certain gender because of our own experiences. "I am not girly - I can't raise a girl."*
- *We might perceive that boys are more likely to distance themselves and girls will grow to be closer to their parents. "I'm so disconnected from my mother-in-law, that's how it will be for me."*
- *We might assign characteristics of the children we know onto their gender. "I can't handle the energy of another boy."*
- *Can mirror a loss, you might hope for a baby girl if you've lost a girl or a mother or someone close to you.*
- *Strong desire for friendship with a certain gender. Longing for a feeling of closeness.*



Suggestions from women who have felt GD:

- *Focus on people in your life with same sex children.*
- *Focus on gratitude.*
- *List of reasons why "wrong" gender is good.*
- *Noticing differences in boys. Noticing differences in girls.*
- *Talking to someone, especially your partner.*
- *Explore options to have another child.*
- *Say goodbye to the dream.*



Where to find support

- *Online forums*
- *Talk about gender disappointment with people you trust.*
- *Talk to a therapist.*



www.rootedsupport.ca

The information on this handout has been researched and compiled by Registered Psychologist, Kristin Romanoski. If any part of this document is altered, the information can no longer be relied upon as information provided by a Registered Psychologist. If you're unsure, please feel free to contact Kristin directly. © 2020