

## Growing up Androgynous

*DD, my best friend since 2<sup>nd</sup> grade has grown up with tough social standards from his family and classmates. Because he portrays himself as more “feminine,” people assume he is either a girl or gay of some sort. This caused him trouble with society growing up because of assumptions made about him. His voice is also more on the higher scale and his features are more feminine and soft which causes misconceptions. Growing up, I myself would sometimes be mistaken for a boy, though I'm not sure why... and recently I went to the doctor's and was mistaken as a boy. In this way, I understand a small bit of where D is coming from. As a result, I wanted to specifically interview him to truly understand his feelings and so that his voice can be heard and people similar to him can relate to this.*

**Me:** *Okay, what is your name?*

**D:** *He slightly rolled his eyes as he thought about this question.*

**Me:** *Who are you?*

**D:** *He smiled obnoxiously and slightly made his voice higher.  
Your bestest friend.*

**Me:** *What are your pronouns?*

**D:** *He/him*

**Me:** *Okay! Then let's get on to it. When was the first time someone has mistaken you as a girl?*

**D:** *He tilted his head as he tried to remember the first time this happened.  
2018- no 2020.*

**Me:** *2020..?*

**D:** *2019.*

**Me:** *And how did that experience go? if you can remember.*

**D:** *I was very um.. Distraught—caught astray.*

**Me:** *Mhm...*

**D:** *Um... very bewildered even-*

**Me:** *Okay... but what happened?*

**D:** Oh! Heh...Um.. I was in shock.

**Me:** *Um.. I'm not asking how you FELT, I'm asking about what happened.*

**D:** Oh! Um it was kind of-

**Me:** *Like, what went down? Who was it?*

**D:** Okay, it was just some random girl at a restaurant who said “Hey ladies” when it was just me and my sister. And she was like “Hey ladies what can I get you.. Um girls started with today?” and my sister was like “Oh that's my brother” and she was like “Oh my god I'm so sorry, but you just.... you kind of look like a girl.”

**Me:** *Oh...someone one time mistook me for a boy at the doctor's office-*

**D:** Um. Anyways.

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** Yeah!

**Me:** *Okay.. Leading on to that, how does it feel having your gender mistaken by people?*

**D:** Um.. It makes me feel like I don't fit- it makes me feel very out of body.

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** Makes me feel like I need to conform-

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** To societal standards.. Shh. And um yeah it makes me feel very umm.. uncomfortable, but I don't correct them because I only see them once in my life, so.. You know.. And my mom was like “Why don't you correct them” and I always say I'm only going to see them once in my life or a few times. But, if you're my friend and you mistake me I'm just going to correct you, and usually they do fine afterwards.

**Me:** *So, they're pretty lenient with it. Right. Alright next question, do you treat people differently when you don't know their gender instead of just assuming just because of experience?*

**D:** *He answered this more slowly as if he were reflecting on how he felt when his gender was mistaken.* Um... yes.. Because I definitely know how it feels to be mistaken or... your gender to be mistaken and I don't want anybody to have that kind of pressure on someone to conform and be like “I don't look like this” or “I don't fit into the stereotype.” So, I just prefer using They/them pronouns until they tell me their own personal pronouns.

**Me:** *Right. And do personally know someone who is androgynous like yourself?*

**D:** Um.. You.

**Me and D:** *Laughing*

**Me:** *Are you serious?*

**D:** Ye-

**Me:** *Wait don't answer that.*

**D:** Oh.

**Me:** *Um... Alright, does anyone close to you hold gender conformity over you, because of gender stereotypes?*

**D:** My mom.

**Me:** *How?*

**D:** So, I have really long hair and sometimes I will put just regular black clips in it to hold it down out of my face. And I did this on my most recent birthday and my mom was like “Why do you have clips in your hair? You look like a girl. You need to stop. You don't look like a boy.” And I have this bag, and it's a crossbody bag, like a satchel. But sometimes I just wear it on my shoulder for a second, if... you know just to get situated. And my mom was like “You look like a girl doing that, boys aren't supposed to wear their bags like that, you are supposed to wear is crossbody. But you don't want to listen to me.”

**Me:** *Mhm*

**D:** “Do you want to be a girl?” but yeah...

*I noticed he started talking faster and his body language changed a bit. So, I could tell that he was truly hurt by what his mom was saying to him and about him. I really wanted to show that I was listening but also let him speak the most so I nodded my head in conformation to continue but tried not to interrupt as the topic seemed more sensitive to him.*

**Me:** *Are there any other people who say similar things?*

**D:** Um.. Yes. A friend of a friend. He knows my gender but he's like “no I don't believe it! Are you transgender? Are you actually a boy? You don't look like a boy or sound like one” So yeah.

**Me:** *I see, I understand...Next. Do you personally consider yourself androgenous? Is that how you would label or title yourself?*

**D:** I mean, I... in between yes and no. Because me personally, I'm a boy, so that is how I'm always going to label myself, but I see why people think that I look like a girl. I mean, I have feminine features, like I don't have strong facial structure, I don't have... my voice isn't really deep---yet. Um...and really long hair and yeah.

**Me:** *I see, going on with that, has this been the biggest impact on your life? And how has this impact affected you?*

**D:** It's been a really big impact on me actually.

**Me:** *How so?*

**D:** *He fake sniffles and coughs to avoid laughing.*

Sorry I'm getting really emotional.

**Me:** *It's okay take your time.*

**D:** This has impacted me because it makes me feel like I need to conform in some sort of way to societal standards like "Oh you don't play sports?" you know-

**Me:** *"You're a wimp" type thing?*

**D:** Um...one could say that. You. Um yeah it just really makes me want to conform, play sports, even though I don't like it. And a lot of my hobbies aren't very "masculine"

**Me:** *Some would say?*

**D:** Some would say. Like myself, I wouldn't say that. But I like games, fashion a lot, and I like photography and yeah, this impact has affected me because it's just really... every day I question..."Am I a girl?"

**Me and D:** *Laughing*

**D:** Yeah. One time I questioned "Am I really a boy?"

**Me and D:** *Laughing...again.*

**D:** One time I just questioned "Am I really a boy? Is this who I am?" And it just makes me feel really out of body.

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** It makes me feel really uncomfortable with my clothes and it makes me feel very gender dysphoric... but not really. Cau-

**Me:** *I get it!*

**D:** Um

**Me:** *Continue...*

**D:** It makes me feel like gender dysphoric because you know....yeah

**Me:** *Yep, we get it.*

**D:** Well...you know. Oh wait. You probably don't know.

**Me:** *Right. I wouldn't know.*

**D:** I myself, know I'm a boy that's what I...

**Me:** *Am destined to be?*

**D:** No. That's what I am. And that's what I identify as.

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** But people call me a girl and then it makes me question like “Oh! I’m not a girl but like.. Am I gay?”

**Me:** *Right.*

**D:** Um.. And I’m not. But it just really makes me feel like “Is this who I am?.” or if it’s like society wants me to be that way and fit into some sort of standard but I’m not. And yeah!

**Me:** *Right. Next! How...even though we kind of just went over this... But if you were to conclude this, how do gender roles and stereotypes affect you? Such as masculinity and femininity.*

**D:** Since we kind of went over this already I will just say, don’t stereotype people off of what they look like. Ask...um ask pronouns, ask what you identify as, ask if they’re comfortable with you assuming that they are androgynous. And yeah.. Don’t assume, be kind, this world is really tough.

**Me:** *Right. It’s a tough world out there.*

**D:** Yeah. Next question?

**Me:** *Have you ever experienced people you know, who you personally know, mistaking/using the wrong pronouns when addressing you? How have these interactions made you feel? And have you tried to correct the mistake when it is made?*

**D:** Um yes, well since we kind of went over this a bit, about a friend of a friend, and I corrected him, yes yes. Like as I said earlier, he just is very ignorant and stubborn. And yeah...I’ve corrected him, but it made me feel like he didn’t take me seriously and like my voice wasn’t heard.

**Me:** *Mhm like they don’t see y-*

**D:** Like they don’t see me as-

**Me:** *Like they don’t see YOU or try to get to know you.*

**D:** Right, I wasn’t really feeling a connection there. So, in conclusion...be nice.

**Me:** *Are there any other people, other than a friend of a friend and your mother who do this?*

**D:** No. Not that I can think of at the top of my head.

**Me:** *Right. Final question, how would you like to be known? As an androgynous person? As a regular guy and no labels in particular? As a male? As a girl?*

**D:** As a male, as a boy. But yeah I feel once I mature a little more, I will have more “masculine” features, and my voice will get deeper and people will start to associate me as a boy/male. And as for androgenous, I guess I can see where people get it from, but I don’t know... Like I said I get what people mean but for now I just want to be called a boy/male and nothing else. And just be considered that way. And that’s all.

**Me:** *Alright, thank you so much D for being in the interview, and how has this interview impacted you?*

**D:** Um it hasn’t really impacted me...

**Me:** *Has it helped you let off a bit of steam ranting about this?*

**D:** Oh in that case, yes! Very much so. It's kind of like a therapy session. Yeah. And I really did like ranting, blowing of steam and venting, one would say. And yeah it has impact- well not really impacted but I did appreciate this, It did help me in some way and I'm glad to have my voice heard and help other people that are going through the same thing as me.

**Me:** *Almost like charity work?*

**D:** No one around me knows how I feel.

**Me:** *Right... Charity!*

**D:** No. Thank you.

**Me and D once again:** *Laughing.*

*After this interview with my best friend I felt that he was feeling a bit better after letting off steam. If I'm being honest we have had this talk many times because we've known each other for many years by now, but I wanted him to let it all out at once in case he had more incidences bottled up. Which he did, but I feel like after this interview in a way, our understanding of each other grew stronger. I chose to interview my friend specifically about this topic, although it may be controversial to some, because I wanted his voice to be heard and he often told me he felt like people didn't truly listen to him when he introduced himself to others, like earlier in the interview a person kept mistaking his gender and although the guy was corrected several times, he did not change. I feel that I got a deeper understanding of my friend and got to see a little of what was on his mind after this interview.*