

The Family Journey
Dialogue Transcript

Title Card (00:00:05)

The Family Journey, Raising Gender Nonconforming Children

Title Card (00:00:09)

The Challenges

Erik (00:10):

From the age of four, we sensed something, this child was almost like an angry child, a lot of temper tantrums, and we just couldn't figure out why.

Danielle (00:19):

You know, you start to doubt yourself as a parent, like, what's wrong with me? What am I not doing right? And you also feel very helpless because as a mom, I want to help my child.

Caroline (00:29):

It always felt like he was fighting something. Fighting life, fighting, fighting, never quite able to fit in. He was bullied. He was rejected. He was marginalized.

Danielle (00:38)

We were diagnosed with Asperger's, OCD, ADD, PDD

Robert (00:44):

Opposite oppositional disorder.

Danielle (00:46):

Behavior disorder. I mean, we went through the whole gamut and nothing. I mean, there was a little bit in every one of those that we kind of went maybe, but nothing significant enough for us to go, oh god, that's it.

Maria Jose (00:59):

Since the first, mainly in the morning, when I will drop him in the preschool, he will just go run into the, to the dresses box and dress as a princess. And then at the end of the day, it was always, you know, you know what? It was always very hard to get him out of that dress.

Pam (01:21):

I knew that she wanted a dress. I mean, that's where this was going. You know, it had been a long time already. And, but we had kind of, we had never said no, but we'd also have kind of offered. And so, she was just so distraught. And so finally, I just said, honey, you really want to dress, don't you? And she was like, yeah. And so we went, we drove to the store, right. Then I have never before. And I don't think ever since seeing her so incredibly happy, I thought she was going to faint. That was just one of those moments of parenting that I will never forget

Larry (02:01):

From my beginning. It was really hard for me to accept the fact that, uh, my biological son wants to wear dresses and, you know, it was, it was tough and I was kind of leaning, okay, well, let's just go towards like the neutral side of colors instead of just pink.

Jeanine (02:17):

She loved pink. And she, uh, got my high heels and, and dresses out of the closet and ran around the house. So, you know, normal boys don't do that on a daily basis. And it was on a daily basis.

Anneke (02:29):

I totally figured that, that I'm not like the other girls in as like early, as I was born pretty much when I looked at other girls and thought I looked at my dress and then thought like, that's not me. I don't like this. I want to take it off. I want to go play with trucks. I don't want to play with barbies.

Nicole (02:55):

I think one of the things that really bothers me is when, when parents go, oh, she's a, huh. Yeah. You know, I know don't worry. I was like that as a child, she'll grow out of it as though it's some kind of affliction that she has

Tiffany (03:07):

One day, he was just totally acting out. And, you know, we just decided that, you know, there's no way to regain that kid to go to school unless he's wearing his car, his shirt, you know, like he needed to wear that. And that was the first time I ever, we ever saw him play on the playground and not stand in a puddle in the corner, you know, like it was really cool to see his confidence just go up and all it took was a shirt. And you know, how you doing, boy? I mean, that's really all it took.

Maria Jose (03:37):

When we were working from preschool to home, he was, you know, he will just start telling me, uh, mommy, I wish I was a girl. And I was, but you know, why, why do you want to be a girl? And he was well, because girls wear long hair and worldwide, you know, dad has long hair and yeah. But you know, they get to wear dresses and, and

okay, well, you know, you can, you can still play with dresses and you need to be a girl to play with dresses.

Erik (04:09):

It was clear in my mind that Aiden always, all these years was kind of dressing like a boy, but I just didn't make the connection that he'd actually be transgender. I sometimes wondered whether he's going to be gay.

Maria Jose (04:21):

I didn't even know how to look in the internet. If I wanted to do an internet search, boys that want to wear dresses, boys that want to be girls. And, um, well basically doing these searches was when I came across the term gender variant that gave me so much peace. You know, like, yeah, this is something that is out there. You know, that older kids actually, you know, um, experience,

Robert (04:52):

It was a relief because we finally had a way of identifying accurately what was happening with our child.

Jeanine (05:01):

So, the first year that my child went to second grade, as a girl, everything was wonderful. And she was so happy and she befriended another child and I called the mother to let her know and ask her, she knew the situation and she was wonderful and uh, said, we are, are, are fine with this. Um, all the, while they went to the school and attacked myself and my child from every direction possible,

Fred (05:26):

We knew that it was a change that would not be readily embraced by almost anybody. Um, and we knew that we were going to have to change the way we looked at our whole role as parents and what that journey was going to be.

Larry (05:49):

It kind of goes along with my background of, you know, being in a predominantly white neighborhood and growing up, you know, as you know, African-American, so it kinda, it was kind of borderline. And so, I didn't want my kid to feel ashamed or, you know, for being who they are,

Nicole (06:07):

She was having such a horrible experience at school. I said, I just want to take her out of school. And I wanted to surround her with people who love her and accept her and will won't try and change her.

Maria Jose (06:19):

And that's, that's what hurts me the most, you know, that he could get hurt sometime in the future.

Fred (06:33):

We gradually evolved to accepting that the change was as profound as considering our son might now be our daughter. I still have a hard time saying that word in relation to her, it's easier to use a female pronoun than to use the word daughter.

Robert (07:04):

It was an incredible realization on my part to just see it for what it is and accept it. Not fight it, not deny it, just accept it. And the moment I did, she was better. Life got better. Um, our family was better and our journey started

Larry (07:23):

As I got used to it and exposed to it more. It began to work and I could see my child being really happy and outgoing and you know, and really expressing herself. So, I think that just turned me. It was just seeing her happy.

Jennifer (07:37):

With every other relationship in the world. There are conditions, um, and the parent child relationship is the only relationship where you must it's. You must have unconditional love.

And if your child is saying that they're one way, even though you think they were born in a different way, you have to get over yourself and get over your own fear. Um, because I think everybody agrees that they want their child to be happy.

Caroline (08:06):

There's a lot of work to get everything lined up, to make this transition as successful as it possibly can be because it's you and the rest of the world.

And so, you have to try and get the people around you in schools, medically friends, friends of the family, family, extended family, the whole thing, neighborhood working for you as much as possible.

Maria Jose (08:31):

Stephanie went to my son's school and provided training to, to all the staff, including teachers, administrative staff, everybody. And, um, and then the students and we had the parents' information night. So officially my son was able to go to school wearing dresses.

Erik (08:52):

And the biggest surprise of all is how easily the peers take. I think once the parents handled it a certain way and the teachers and its motto fact, the children just slop right in,

Nicole (09:01):

We just recently started on a medication that suppresses, uh, the hormones of adolescents. So, it buys Annika time to decide where she's at in that fluid place, whether it's a male place or a female place that she's transitioning too eventually

Robert (09:17):

If, and when the time comes up, that she's old enough and emotionally ready and she decides she wants to make a permanent change. Then that's her call. I've learned to trust her instincts on this.

Anneke (09:32):

I just like, think of myself, uh, am I, am I gay or lesbian? Right. Or are, or am I trans, which they both don't fit. So, I think I'm somewhere in the middle, not at either end, like in the middle of a soccer field, you know, I'm not a, I'm not a goalie in soccer, so I'm not at one end or the other, I'm a forward pretty much.

Tiffany (09:59):

There's way more than two genders. If you can count, you know, that, you know, there's just so much about gender. We still don't know, but whatever I accept it, you know, people are just people and that's all that matters.

Melina (10:14):

There's a little bit more to this than that. What do you think? You know, it's not just male and female, black and white, you know, this is what life is, open your eyes. So, I just kinda feel like that's why this is my purpose for coming to this earth. So

Fred (10:28):

My child is a pioneer. Uh, she didn't choose to be, she just is. And fortunately for us, as it happens, we have a very outgoing and very, uh, determined young person in our lives who teaches me every day that the most improbable reality, if it's embraced with commitment is as powerful as any reality I ever dreamed of

Maria Jose (11:05):

Some of the things that have come out from, from his mouth. I wish god who had made me a girl. You know, that was basically what totally shake my whole foundation. You know, I, that was when I was determined to do, make it happen. Um, when he tells me

mommy, I want to be a girl. I tell him, yes, I'm going to help you with that. You are going to be a girl. You are already a girl.

Nicole (11:50):

My husband, I think, uh, has moments. People say, you know, do you want another with two girls? And do you want another child? Cause you could have a boy. You know, it's such a masculine thing to want a boy. And he, he walks around and goes, why would I want a boy? I have a boy. She's the best son I could ever want.

Jeanine (12:10):

The gifts are getting to see my child enjoy life and to finally get to be who she is because she was living a lie. And now she is so happy.

Caroline (12:19):

I've learned so much from my child that I would never hope to ever learn from anybody on this planet.

Maria Jose (12:25):

I think that the gift, um, is an everyday lesson of, you know, [inaudible] patience, tolerance and love, every day.

Fred (12:46):

My particular child is going to be some kind of force in the world and I am lucky enough to be connected with that. And that may be the most important thing that I do in my life is being parent to this child.

Danielle (13:04):

I'm not so scared anymore or worried about what's coming up next. It just feels like everything's falling into place.

Jeanine (13:11):

She can be around people now, you know, and meet people and say, you know, this is who I am and accept me or not.

Tiffany (13:17):

He's so energetic and so happy and just really glad to be alive and be who he is and be proud of who he is.

Pam (13:25):

Changing the, the binary gender system of these two strict boxes will benefit. Everyone will benefit everybody's kid and every child as they grow up. So yeah, I feel like we don't have a choice, but to deal with it. But I feel like it's, it is a gift to our communities and to

the world that we will hopefully in small steps be changing people's perception of gender in general.