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-East senior Dylan Pyron

for patients she works with not to come out to their parents first.

“Usually, [coming out] comes in waves,” Snedecor told Spark. “They may come out on the internet first because it’s a supportive environment [and] there’s anonymity. People come out to their friends next, because there is less pressure there. [With parents], there’s a lot of pressure involved. Sometimes parents are the last to know just because there’s a lot riding on it.”

According to Pyron, he began to realize that the ‘female’ label he’d been born with just didn’t fit right around middle school.

“It’s hard to ascertain a certain point where everything flipped and I was like ‘I’m a boy!’ It was more of a process,” Pyron says. “I thought that there was something wrong with me. I thought that I was a freak. I didn’t want to talk to anyone about it because I thought they would tell me that I was crazy.”

After Pyron came out, according to his mother, Colleen Pyron, he was “5,000% happier and a lot more confident.”

“[Before he came out, Dylan] was very depressed, very down and very withdrawn. It was very different than the way he’d been,” Colleen told Spark. “Now he doesn’t hesitate—he’s not very shy. I didn’t know a lot about [what transgender meant]. What makes sense though, is that treating Dylan this way is making him a more whole person, and a happier person, so to me that’s the sensible choice.”

Dylan, his mother Colleen, and his father Lindsey Pyron began going to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital for therapy when Dylan was in eighth grade. Once Dylan came out, they switched to the Cincinnati Children’s Transgender Health Clinic, which provides services to transgender youth five to 24 years of age.

“Demand [at the clinic] has gone up [over the last few years]. We’ve got over 1600 kids in the clinics now,” says Snedecor, who’s worked with Cincinnati Children’s since July of 2019. “We’re drawing from six different states—quite a big spread. [I think] it’s really how culture is changing. We’re becoming more affirming and accepting.”

According to Snedecor, an “affirming” environment is key for LGBTQ+ people.

“When [patients] realize that it’s a safe place

here, people just tend to blossom and open up a lot about what’s going on,” Snedecor says. “[At the clinic they] finally get the care that [they] need and what [they’ve] been looking for.”

According to the 2019 Trevor Project, 71% of surveyed LGBTQ+ youth reported being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. At East, 63% of surveyed students say they’ve seen or experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. For Dylan, however, that discrimination is not limited to the halls of high school.

“[I remember] we were on a road trip, [and] I went into the bathroom in a gas station. I went to wash my hands [and] here was a man at the sink. A very scary, burly man. He looked at me, he did a double take. It was like in the cartoons,” Dylan says. “And he went to his pocket, he pulled out a switchblade, flipped it open and pointed it at me [and said], ‘If me or my friends ever see you in a men’s bathroom again, I’m gonna cut you.’”

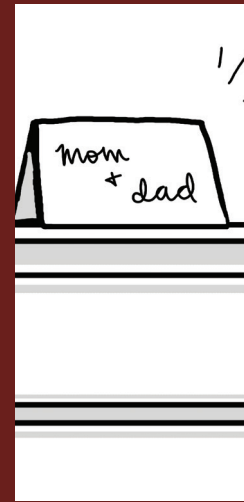
Instances like this have made Dylan wary of public restrooms.

“I was obviously really scared,” Dylan says. “[After that] I got back in the car and didn’t even tell my family what had happened. I was still in shock. Now when I go into public restrooms, [only if] I absolutely have to, [I’ll] walk in and put on my meanest face, like, ‘don’t talk to me.’ And hopefully I don’t get stabbed.”

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), over 50% of transgender or gender-expansive youth say they can never use school restrooms that align with their personal gender identity.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect data regarding the number of LGBTQ+ Americans, nor their sexual orientation or preferred pronouns. However, according to a 2017 Gallup poll, approximately 4.5% of Americans are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, a steadily increasing number, according to the same survey. The Williams Law Institute estimates 1.4% of Americans identify as transgender.

As with many other members of the transgender community, Dylan suffers from



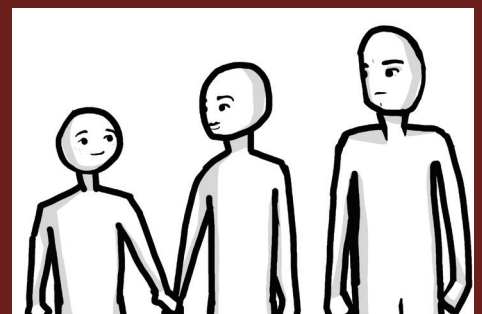
“I actually gave a letter to my parents [that said] ‘Hey, I’m trans,’ and then I left for a friend’s house with all the money and clothes that I had, thinking that [my parents] were gonna kick me out. I was absolutely terrified.”



“My mom called me [and said] ‘this is a discussion that we need to have at home.’ I spent the night at my friend’s house and then I went back the next morning. I was pooping my pants, I was so terrified.”



“It was just my mom at home. My dad wasn’t there yet. So we talked. I cried. She cried.”

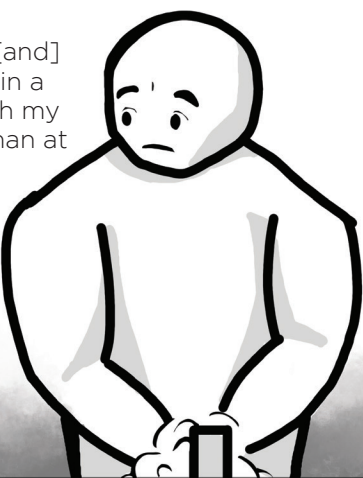


“[At first] it was weird to have my secret out in the open, because before it was just something that only I knew and some of my friends knew. It was weird to be in a situation where I could possibly be validated.”

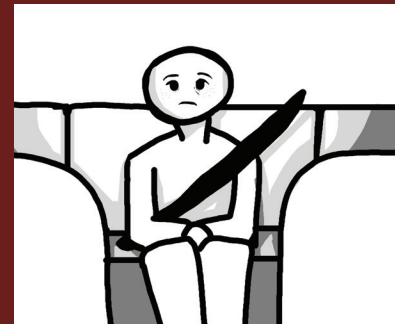
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gender dysphoria, a condition caused when a person identifies as an identity which does not match their physical appearance and suffers severe mental distress for this reason.

“There’s a lot of things that I want to change [about myself] so that I can present as more masculine and people would see me as such,” Dylan says. “I feel dysphoric about my voice and the way I look, but especially my voice. It sucks.”

For Dylan, one way he was able to combat his dysphoria was by undergoing a legal name change on Sept. 4 2018. Since he was a minor, he needed consent forms from both of his parents to be able to change his name.

“I wanted Dylan to be the one to drive [his name change],” Colleen says. “My thought was, if it’s something that’s really important, then I wanted him to be old enough to know what the process would be. I wanted it to be something that he felt was important and that he could stand behind.”

In order to change one’s name in the state of Ohio, one must first submit a petition to a court, according to the Ohio Revised Code. Then, at least 30 days before the hearing, the petitioner must publish a notice in a newspaper detailing the change. In certain cases, however, publication can be waived for an applicant’s personal safety, however.

If the person is a minor, however, the process is different. The minor’s parent or legal guardian must submit an application with the Probate court informing the court of the child’s birth name (now more commonly known among the LGBTQ+ community as a ‘dead name’), the name the child wishes to adopt, and the reasons for the name change. A small fee must also be paid. Notice of the name change must also be published in a newspaper 30 days before the court date.

“We’d already been calling him Dylan,” Lindsey says. “The official court date and everything was literally just [a formality]. The

only thing that hurt me a little bit was our kids [have] family names. And [names] mean something when you’re older. I wish Dylan would have said, ‘Hey, I want to come up with a male name. Let’s pick one, let’s go through family history.’ But that’s a sentimental thing more than anything.”

As of January 2020, Dylan is now 18 years old, meaning if he intends to begin gender-affirming hormone therapy, he does not need to present parental consent from both parents.

According to Snedecor, patients who wish to begin hormone therapy need a letter of recommendation from a therapist, a medical evaluation, and basic bloodwork. Additionally, a person who wishes to begin hormone therapy is required to have either gone through therapy or been on puberty blockers for at least several years. Any patient under the age of 18 must have a signed consent form from their parents and/or guardians.

Lindsey is concerned that Dylan, who turned 18 in January 2020, will regret transitioning later on in life.

“Certainly a 15 year old and still a 17 or 18 year old, you think you know what you want in life. You really don’t,” Lindsey told Spark. “Probably 95% of people end up doing something different in life than they thought they were going to do when they’re a teenager. So in my dream world Dylan would wait until he’s 22 [or] 23 years old to make that decision. I just don’t want him to have regrets.”

A 2013 Swedish study of transgender patients concluded that about 2.2% of transgender people who transitioned ‘regret’ undergoing the process.

Ohio’s “Protect Vulnerable Children Act,” which was introduced by Republican Reps. Ron Hood of Ashville and Bill Dean of Xenia in February 2020, would charge physicians with a third degree felony if they were to perform

therapeutic or surgical procedures intended to alter one’s gender on a person under the age of 18. Hood’s concern lies in the irreversible nature of procedures such as hormone therapy.

Ten other states, including Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois, have introduced laws banning gender-related medical procedures.

“We do have a conversation of what’s reversible and what’s not [with our patients], [but] it’s very very rare for somebody to reverse hormones,” Snedecor says. “[The change is] very gradual, it’s going to be a few months before you notice much of anything. You’re not going to wake up the next morning and look totally different.”

Dylan will be waiting a few more months before beginning hormone therapy.

“I would love to [start hormone therapy now], but because I’m doing [East’s] musical right now, I can’t afford my voice changing,” Pyron says. “So I have to wait until after the musical. It sucks but I’ve waited four years, I can wait four months. I don’t want to [though].”

Since he hasn’t yet transitioned, Dylan is often confused for a female. Even when he corrects others for their mistake, they sometimes don’t heed his request for them to use the proper name or pronouns.

“People will [say], ‘I didn’t know Dylan was a girl’s name,’” Dylan says. “[So I just say], ‘Because it’s not.’ That’s it. [Once at work], this lady looked at me [really weird]. And then I was like, ‘Do you want this in a bag?’”

According to Dylan, it doesn’t take much to be an ally.

“I think a lot of times adults look at me and think that I’m trying to make a political statement. I’m not. I’m just trying to exist,” Dylan says. “You respecting me is just human decency. That doesn’t mean you’re [a] number one ally. That does not affect your political beliefs at all. It does not affect your religious beliefs. All that means is that I’m a human person and you’re recognizing that.” •