Hitting Puberty

• Before puberty: let the child explore and unfold at their own pace

• Prepare for puberty by talking openly with the child beforehand. Puberty can be traumatic.

• Hormone blockers to postpone decision of whether or not to medically transition: research and discuss with child and doctor

• Transgender hormone treatment if the child continues to feel strongly they want the pubertal features of the other gender than the one they were assigned at birth
Why not wait till they’re older?

- Physical body changes begin at puberty, and then if the child reaches adulthood with a clear sense of wanting to transition, they will need multiple surgeries and treatments, such as mastectomy, facial reconstruction, electrolysis or laser hair removal—postponing body changes prevents this.

- Hormone blockers and hormonal transition in adolescence avoids the costly surgeries and painful stigma of ambiguous gender presentation, which may leave them frustrated, depressed, or suicidal.

- For surgery: Ehrensaft advises that most trans teenagers wait until adulthood, when they may be more psychologically ready.
The Therapist’s Role: Working with the Family

- Managing tension between the gender-creative child and parents, siblings, step-family
- Preventing rejection and abandonment by the family, or assisting the foster family
- Linking both the child and family with supportive peers, counselors, PFLAG, and trans activist groups
- Taking a gender affirmative approach, not engaging in pathologizing or conversion therapy
Treating the Child and/or the Family

- Meet with the parents to provide support, information, and options
- Help the parents to provide acceptance and encouragement
- Provide therapy to the child if they are anxious, depressed, angry, or exhibiting self-destructive behavior
- Provide help to children who are victims of bullying, both advocacy in the school and skill-building to the child to respond more effectively
- Children who are very shy or have difficulty making friends can benefit from therapy to reduce social anxiety
Advocacy and Therapy

• Your work as the child’s therapist, helping to create safety for their authentic gender identity, may require working with parents, teachers, other family members, school counselors, principals, pediatricians, medical specialists, and more.

• The primary job of the therapist: really listen to the child, really understand where the parents are, and provide information in a way they can really hear.