



Ronja Karjalainen

When the parent comes out as transgender

An information leaflet for the families where
a parent belongs to a gender minority

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor of Social Services
Degree Programme in Social Services
Thesis
Autumn 2014

Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Sateenkaariperheet ry (Rainbow Families)	2
3 Need for this project	3
4 Terms and background	4
5 What are transfamilies?	5
6 Crisis and stressful life events	6
6.1 What is stress?	6
6.2 Phases of crisis	6
6.3 Crisis as a turning point	7
7 Developmental task	8
7.1 Target audience	8
7.2 The reasons behind choosing a leaflet format	9
7.3 The use of the leaflet	10
7.4 The process of producing the leaflet	10
8 Discussion	11
References	13
Appendix. Kun puoliso onkin transihminen	

Tekijä(t) Otsikko	Ronja Karjalainen Kun vanhempi on trans: Infolehtinen perheille, joissa vanhempi on kertonut kuuluvansa sukupuolivähemmistöön
Sivumäärä Aika	18 sivua + 1 liite 03.11.2014
Tutkinto	Sosionomi AMK
Koulutusohjelma	Sosiaalian koulutusohjelma
Suuntautumisvaihtoehto	Sosiaaliala
Ohjaaja(t)	Terhi Salokannel-Stenberg, Lehtori Jukka Törnroos, Lehtori
<p>Kun perheen vanhempi kertoo, että hän kokee kuuluvansa johonkin sukupuolivähemmistöön – transsukupuoliset, muunsukupuoliset, transvestiitit tai intersukupuoliset – vaikutukset tuntuvat koko perheessä. Vuonna 2012 Tilastokeskus laski, että Suomessa on 405 tilastoissa näkyvää sateenkaariperhettä. Toisaalla tutkimustulokset kertoivat, että 8 % sateenkaariperheistä on transperheitä. Näiden lukujen perusteella transperheiden määrä ei näyttäisi olevan kovin suuri. Tämä on yksi niistä syistä, joiden takia transperheiden puoliset kokevat usein olevansa yksin asian kanssa. Myös Sateenkaariperheet ry:ssä on tunnistettu näiden perheiden tuentarve. Lopputyössäni koostin infolehtisen transperheiden vanhemmille. Pääkohderyhmänä olivat ne vanhemmat, joiden puoliso on juuri kertonut omasta sukupuolikokemuksestaan. Tällaisen asian kuuleminen saatetaan usein kokea järkyttävänä ja stressaavana. Sateenkaariperheet ry on nimennyt transperheiden juridisen aseman parantamisen yhdeksi poliittiseksi tavoitteekseen vuosiksi 2014–2019. Infolehtisen tarkoituksena on parantaa transperheiden sosiaalista asemaa myös ns. sisältä päin.</p> <p>Infolehtiseen on kerätty perustietoa sukupuolen moninaisuudesta, sen mahdollisista vaikutuksista vanhempien keskinäiseen viestintään, seksuaalisuuteen ja vanhempien ja lasten väliseen suhteeseen. Lehtisessä on myös vinkkejä siihen, kuinka sukupuolen moninaisuuden voi ottaa puheeksi lasten kanssa. Näiden lisäksi mukana on tietoa henkisen kuormituksen ja stressin hallinnasta. Lehtiseen mukaan otettavat aihepiirit valikoituivat Sateenkaariperheet ry:n tunnistamien vajavaisten resurssien ja Transtukipisteellä suorittamassani harjoittelussa esiin nousseiden tarpeiden perusteella.</p> <p>Transperheiden elämäntilanteet vaihtelevat suuresti eikä yksi lehtinen voi tarjota sopeutumismallia, joka sopisi kaikille. Siksi lehtisen tarkoituksena on tarjota ”henkistä ensiapua” ja tiivistä faktatietoa, joista perheet voivat itse rakentaa itselleen sopivan mallin asian työstämiseen. Lehtisen takakannessa on myös lisätukea tarjoavien tahojen yhteystiedot, ja perheet voivat hakea tukea tarvittaessa.</p> <p>Lehtinen tulee esille Sateenkaariperheet ry:n toimistoon muiden tietolähteiden joukkoon. Sitä hyödyntäneiden perheiden palaute otetaan huomioon mahdollisessa jatkokehittämisessä.</p>	
Avainsanat	sukupuolivähemmistöt, transgender, sateenkaariperheet

Author(s) Title Number of Pages Date	Ronja Karjalainen When parent comes out as transgender: An information leaflet for the families where a parent belongs to a gender minority 18 pages + 1 appendix 03.11.2014
Degree	Bachelor of Social Services
Degree Programme	Social Services
Specialisation option	Social Services
Instructor(s)	Terhi Salokannel-Stenberg, Lecturer Jukka Törnroos, Lecturer
<p>When a parent comes out as a member of a gender minority – transsexual, transgender, transvestite or intersexual – the whole family is affected. In 2012 Statistics Finland counted 405 rainbow families visible in the statistics. Results in another study showed that 8% of rainbow families are transfamilies. Together those numbers show that the group of transfamilies is relatively small. That is one of the reasons why the partners often feel alone with the issue and that need for support was also noted in Sateenkaariperheet ry. In this final project an informational leaflet for the transfamilies was produced. The aim of the leaflet was to reach out to those parents whose partner has just come out as a member of a gender minority, which can be a stressful and shocking situation. Sateenkaariperheet ry has listed improving the legal status of transfamilies as one of their political aims for 2014-2019 and this leaflet aims to improve the social situation within transfamilies.</p> <p>The leaflet consists of general information about gender minorities, and information about the possible effects that the coming out can have on the relationships both between the parents and also in relation to the children. A chapter about how to address the topic of gender minorities with children is also included. In addition to these, information about how to deal with emotional stress was seen as an important part of the leaflet. The topics were chosen based on the knowledge at Sateenkaariperheet ry and the needs that I noticed while doing my work placement in Transtukupiste.</p> <p>The situations of transfamilies are varied and every case is unique. A leaflet cannot offer a model that would fit all families. The leaflet serves as "emotional first-aid" and black-on-white fact sheet to help the families find the necessary resources within themselves to start working on the situation. Information about more support resources is included at the back of the leaflet. Those resources can be utilized if and when needed, according to each family's individual journey.</p> <p>The leaflet will be available in the office of Sateenkaariperheet ry. The feedback from the families using it will be utilized to develop it further.</p>	
Keywords	gender minorities, transgender, rainbow families

1 Introduction

Sexual and gender minorities have become a visible part of Finnish society. The Pride march in Helsinki in June 2014 had a record number of participants (Liekki, T-R 2014). Transpeople have become more visible in the mainstream media and the renewal of laws concerning the recognition of the gender one identifies with has become a part of the public discussion. In general, knowledge about the existence of different gender minorities has grown over the recent years. However, the media and public discussion seldom focus on the families of those who belong to the gender minorities.

In my final project I produced an information leaflet about gender minorities for Sateenkaariperheet ry. The leaflet is aimed for parents of rainbow families where one parent has recently come out as member of gender minority, for example as a transman. Very little information is available about transfamilies especially in Finnish and this leaflet is answering to that need.

When a parent comes out or feels distressed over their gender identity, it affects the whole family. The leaflet focuses on the overview of what it means for the family when one parent comes out. It offers information about what gender minorities are and how the change in family can affect everyone involved in varying ways. It also offers some advice on how to talk about gender minorities with the children.

In addition to the transfamilies visiting Sateenkaariperheet ry the leaflet could be useful to have as a resource in any social field office or organization where families are among the client groups. The need for it may arise when least expected and a worker being able to offer information sends a strong positive message to the client.

2 Sateenkaariperheet ry (Rainbow Families)

Sateenkaariperheet ry is a Finnish association functioning in the field of family work and child welfare. It is a member organization of SETA – Sexual Equality in Finland. Its focus group are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexuals and their children. The association shares information and functions as a contact forum and support network while also acting as a defending and lobbying body for rainbow families and for those interested on the subject. The members of the association are families with two mothers or fathers, single-parent families, families with step-children and also people who are interested in parenthood. (Yhdistyksen esittely n.d., Rainbow families, n. d.)

Sateenkaariperheet ry offers both expert services for the political and educational field actors and support services for the members of rainbow families. The work consists mainly of meetings, family camps and training services. The field of operations is diverse and includes human rights work, development of family politics, diversity education, work with children, young people and families and development of social, health and education services (Yhdistyksen esittely n.d.).

Sateenkaariperheet ry aims to create a more diverse idea of what "a family" means. According to their view definition of a family should include more of the diversity that already exists in life. The association aims at having a say on the topics affecting rainbow families. They also offer factual and collect information on lesbian, bi, trans and gay parents and their families and their every-day lives. (Yhdistyksen esittely n.d.)

For the period of 2014-2015 the board of Sateenkaariperheet ry has agreed on political aims concerning families in Finland. One of the aims is removing the barriers that transsexuals face, both in everyday life and in legal matters. Key points mentioned are updating the current legislation concerning the medical treatment, parenthood and fertility treatments of transsexuals to guarantee equal treatment to transsexuals compared to non-transsexuals. (Sateenkaariperheet ry:n perhepoliittiset tavoitteet vuosille 2014-2019 2014) While Sateenkaariperheet ry promotes the rights of

transpeople on the political field, they also wish to improve the services they offer directly to transpeople and their families.

3 Need for this project

As Madeline Rivers, a spouse of a transgendered person, writes in the article *Shock and Confusion – With Love* (2008): “I’ve been showed into the rarest of rare categories” (Rivers 2008, p. 59). During my work placement in Transtukipiste (Trans support center) I noticed the same feeling of rarity when I was co-leader of peer support group for spouses of transpeople. Almost every spouse had been the only “transpartner” in their own social circle and meeting others in the similar situation was a huge relief. Having access to information that is specifically aimed at transfamilies also has an empowering effect as it helps them to take control of their life situation.

From Sateenkaariperheet ry it was told to me that while they run peer support groups for example for same-sex parents and clover (more than 2 parents) families, transfamilies are more rare and there often is not enough of them as clients at the same time to form an own peer support group concentrating on the topics specific to the transfamilies. Sateenkaariperheet ry expressed a need for some written information that would be aimed directly for the transfamilies that may already be participating on some of their other activities. The reasons for such material were 2-fold: on the one hand they want to offer written information that they are currently lacking and on the other hand the availability of such information may prompt some – formerly unknown to Sateenkaariperheet ry as such – transfamilies to come out and possibly count towards peer group participants.

4 Terms and background

Gender is defined in social contexts and can be described as “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex” (Gender n.d.). Whereas sex to be shown in official documents is assigned at birth one's gender identity is one's “private sense of, and subjective experience of, their own gender” (Gender Identity 2012).

People can be loosely divided into cisgender and transgender people. The term cisgender is used to describe those people whose sex and gender are in line with each other and the cultural standards. Transgender people include those whose sex (anatomy, chromosomes etc.) are inconsistent with their gender (sense of self). (Grollman 2010) The use of transterms varies slightly both within the English speaking world and between Finnish and English language. In this paper, the term “transperson” (transihminen) is used when referring to transgender people described above because it includes the target groups of the leaflet and can be translated directly between Finnish and English. The term transpeople includes 3 groups of people: those that were assigned male at birth but identify as female (or vice versa), those that identify as something other than male or female and those that (sometimes) dress to clothes not typically associated with their assigned sex (Mikä sateenkaariperhe? n. d.).

A person can identify as a transperson from an early age, express it and receive the treatments needed in the early adulthood. However, some transpeople come to realize their identity at a much later stage, when they may already have families and/or children on their own. It is also possible that a transperson has tried to hide the feelings of being born in the wrong body for a long time and finally shares those feelings with a spouse after years of trying to hide and/or deny them.

5 What are transfamilies?

Transfamilies as a subgroup of rainbow families are families where one or more parents identify as transperson (Mikä sateenkaariperhe? n. d.). Transfamilies can be varied the same way as cisfamilies. Family structures can be but are not necessarily limited to some of the following: single parent families, families with two parents, clover families (where children have more than one family unit), blended families (where the current family has been formed after the birth of a child) or polyamorous families (where there are more than two parents).

According to a survey conducted for "Suomalaiset sateenkaariperheet sosiaali- ja terveystalouksissa ja koulussa" book, 8% of rainbow families were transfamilies, meaning that one or more of the parents identified themselves to be part of the gender minorities (Kuosmanen & Jämsä 2007). In Statistic Finland's statistics from 2012, there are 405 "official" rainbow families in Finland (Sateenkaariperheet tuovat väriä tilastoihin 2013). But as the article states, statistics do not tell the whole truth about the family structures as they only count two people who have registered their partnership and also have children. Single parents who identify as rainbow parents as well as co-habiting (not registered) parents of same sex do not show on the statistics. Transfamilies where the parents belong to the female and male sex respectively, based on their (current) juridical sex, also do not show on the statistics as rainbow families. Because of these reasons it is hard to know the actual number of transfamilies.

6 Crisis and stressful life events

Crisis is most often seen as a negative event in Western culture. However, it has different meanings around the world. In Greece a crisis can be a time for decision-making. The Chinese view is two-fold: danger (Wei) or opportunity (Chi). The Western view also sees crisis as something that has to be quickly fixed (by interventions) so that life can return to normal and does not always distinguish between acute crisis situations (such as natural disasters) and stressful life situations (divorce, for example). (Trevithick 2012)

6.1 What is stress?

The term stress is most often used to describe a situation that places so many challenges and demands on the person, that the means of available for adaptation run out. Stress is not limited to only negative events, positive challenges can be stressful as well. Among the common stress inducers are constant hurry, work-related troubles, excessive responsibilities, problems in the family and sudden life changes. (Mattila 2010) Stress causes people worry about the future, and makes them impatient and agitated. The physical symptoms of stress are typical to a fight or flight reaction in a danger situation. (Lönqvist 2009) The most common symptoms are irritability, anxiety, depression, sleep problems and difficulty in making decisions (Mattila 2010).

Acute stress can be caused by several little accumulating events during a longer period, such as too many demands at work and at home. On the other hand, one event that is significant enough can also cause an acute stress reaction. Events like this are often sudden and unpredicted and threaten the life, safety or stability of the person in question. (Lönqvist 2009)

6.2 Phases of crisis

Coulshed and Orme write in their book *Social Work Practice* (2012) that crises are something that occur throughout the life and are usually passed by using the tried and

tested coping methods. Only when something novel happens or crises follow each other too closely can the crisis actually linger a bit longer and require more drastic actions. Those crises can be divided into categories based on their meanings. Coulshed and Orme describe crises caused by bereavement or loss as a situation where loss can be either concrete (such as death) or more abstract (loss of old identity when giving birth, for example). According to Coulshed and Orme, people often react emotionally to the underlying loss despite the general nature of the event.

The crisis that occurs because of bereavement or loss often follows a certain path and can be divided into five stages: alarm, searching, mitigation, anger and guilt and finally gaining a new identity. However, those stages have been criticized for being too strict and seem to emphasize that a person should somehow "recover" from the initial crisis. Coulshed and Orme write that every person goes through crisis in their own way and the phase theories are not meant to be seen as instructions for the people in crisis but as guidelines for professionals for spotting out those that need additional help. (Coulshed & Orme 2012)

6.3 Crisis as a turning point

Thompson's theory about crisis intervention places greater importance on the people affected and their feelings rather than the actual events. By doing so it gives the people an active role as participants rather than receivers of a crisis. Each person has their individual life experiences and background and same events can have different effects on different people. This emphasizes the nature of crisis as an varied phenomenon that does not have a one-size-fits-all solution. (Payne 2014)

In this view the everyday life consists of little ups and downs that can usually be managed using person's own coping methods. Thompson calls this a "steady state" as the person is able to return back to normal after having dealt with the situations. A hazardous event (death of a friend, for example) is something that shakes the balance of one's life more than usual and it leads to tension and distress. It is not a crisis on its own but it places people at risk of crisis if more events occur before one has recovered from the hazardous event.

The situation has the potential of developing into a crisis if a precipitating event follows the hazardous event. A precipitating event is described as something that is both a threat and an opportunity (job offering, for example). If the stress of the aftermath of the hazardous event and the new event becomes too much to bear, persons coping methods fail and an active crisis manifests. In the state of active crisis the person experiences the physical and emotional symptoms of acute stress. The active stage morphs from disorganization and recoil back into a steady stage in about 6 weeks. The newly reached steady stage can be either decreased, resumed or improved compared to the steady stage prior to the crisis. If the steady stage is in danger of turning into a decreased one, outside help may be needed.

7 Developmental task

As my final project I produced, wrote and designed a leaflet titled "Kun kumppani onkin transihminen" for Sateenkaariperheet ry. Learning that one's spouse is transperson can be a shock and disrupt the feelings of safety and certainty about one's life and family. Often the news comes as a shock and the spouse may have nobody to turn to for support because the trans issues are not yet widely known. The leaflet is produced to meet the needs of knowledge and support of the spouses and families.

7.1 Target audience

The leaflet is aimed for the parents of rainbow families where a parent has recently come out as member of gender minority, for example as a transman. The main emphasis is on the spouse of the person belonging to the gender minority. However, one spouse cannot be separated completely from the rest of the family. That is why the leaflet looks at the whole family from the spouses' point of view.

The leaflet is aimed at spouses in all situations described by Thompson's theory: those that feel the "new" gender identity is an everyday challenge and those that feel the whole world has turned upside down because of this. However, the role of the leaflet is

different in different situations. For the spouses who deal with the trans topic using their own set of coping skills, the leaflet can act as a back-up and maybe offer insights into how to approach the issue with children. For those that are affected by the topic more profoundly (maybe because a previous event), the leaflet can act as a stepping stone towards steadier stage or finding additional help. It can also happen that the leaflet and the information it provides helps the family to make better use of their existing coping skills thus avoiding an acute crisis.

Thompson's views are in line with the different situations that the transfamilies find themselves in when a parent has just come out; no situation is the same even though the actual events are similar. This is why the leaflet focuses on offering basic information, tips and suggestion, but does not include any definite rules on how the families should proceed when dealing with the topic.

7.2 The reasons behind choosing a leaflet format

Providing the information in a leaflet form was chosen because transfamilies are not a defined group of clients that could be easily reached by weekend course or similar activity offered by Sateenkaariperheet ry. The aim of the project was to offer low-threshold information that is easily accessible, also for those living further from the Sateenkaariperheet ry's office in Helsinki. The leaflet is not tied to place and time and it can also be taken home and read privately if needed. It can be easily distributed to cooperating organizations around Finland and possibly added to Sateenkaariperheet ry's website for home printing.

The situations of transfamilies are all unique and no advice fits all. A parent coming out can also be a shock to the other family members. For those reasons the leaflet does not aim to answer every possible question nor does it offer deep insight in all aspects of gender. It focuses on giving a first aid type of collection of facts for someone who is not familiar with the topic of gender minorities and may be experiencing a lot of emotional stress. The leaflet offers the spouse basic information about gender minorities and emotional stress, describes the effects of the coming out can have on relationship and the whole family and offers tips on how to explain the situation the

children. Contact details and descriptions of Sateenkaariperheet ry and Transtukipiste are also included.

The leaflet will be printable on regular A4-paper, preferably as 2-sided print. To form the actual leaflet, it will then be folded into three. Simple A4 format was chosen because it is easy to print and does not require any additional work such as cutting. It is also big enough to include information about many subtopics of transfamilies, but not too big as to overwhelm the reader.

7.3 The use of the leaflet

The leaflet will be available in the office of Sateenkaariperheet ry for all the clients to read. It can also be distributed to other organizations or campaigns if needed. The leaflet can be taken home or read in the Sateenkaariperheet ry's office. Although it is primarily aimed at the spouses of transpeople, the use is not strictly limited to them only. For example, a transperson can find the leaflet useful when the topic is discussed in the family. The leaflet may create discussion among the clients of Sateenkaariperheet ry and help form either spontaneous or per-organized meetings of transfamilies.

7.4 The process of producing the leaflet

The process of producing the leaflet started in early 2014 when I was discussing possible topics final project with a worker of Sateenkaariperheet ry and the lack of information available for some of their client groups was brought up. I had just recently finished my practical placement in Transtukipiste (Trans Support Center) and felt that my knowledge from there could benefit Sateenkaariperheet ry and their work. During my placement I had worked closely with the spouses of transpeople. Because of this, it was decided that my work for Sateenkaariperheet ry would focus on transfamilies and the spouses in particular.

There is very little scientific literature about the spouses of transpeople and their feelings. Most of the literature available about a spouse "coming out" concerns sexual

orientations. I managed to acquire one book *Trans Forming Families* (Boenke 2008) which includes some stories from the spouses of transpeople. I combined a list of topics to include to the leaflet based on the sexual orientations "coming out" stories and the few trans stories available and then compared the topics with my experiences from working as a group leader for a spouses group during my placement. The most important topics that came up most often were: What is trans?, What happens to us and our relationship?, What about our children?, I feel shocked and betrayed, am I a horrible person? and Where do we get help in dealing with this?.

The topics were arranged into an order that might feel most helpful to a reader. They also follow loosely the phases of crisis discussed in *Social Work Practice* by Coulshed and Orme (2012). The leaflet starts with offering information about gender to answer the questions from searching phase and also offers reassurance that possible reactions of confusion and anger are acceptable and normal. It then moves to address the concerns the spouses might have about the relationship and its future. After that is a section about children and how to tell them about the parent's trans experience. The contact details for more support are on the last page. But if one wishes, they can also be found faster by turning the leaflet around right away.

The first version of the leaflet was written in autumn 2014 and edited based on the feedback from Sateenkaariperheet ry. The leaflet was then sent back for further feedback and attached to this paper after final small edits. At this point the leaflet does not have many design features, but it may be edited further at a later date to include official logos and color themes at a later stage, possibly after feedback from at least some of the clients.

8 Discussion

The leaflet will be made available in Sateenkaariperheet ry's office and the workers will be listening to any feedback. No official collection for feedback will be organized as the target group of the leaflet is very small. However, the smaller target group can result in deeper and more personal feedback if someone feels that the leaflet has really helped them (or has not helped them). The development of the leaflet will most likely be a

slow process because of the small target group that is shattered around Finland. For that reason the leaflet will be given to Sateenkaariperheet ry as an open file which can be edited when needed.

I will also ask feedback from the spouses that visit Transtukupiste. Most of them do not have children, but they can give feedback about the other sections based on their experiences and also – if they want – tell how they would want to address the topic with children. I also feel that it would be good if Transtukupiste made the leaflet available for their clients in their office.

If the need arises, the leaflet could also be translated to other languages. Sateenkaariperheet ry currently shares an office together with Adoptioperheet and Familia Club. For that reason it would be good to have the leaflet available also in other languages. It would be a real shame if anyone of the clients of those other organizations were looking for information that was made available only in Finnish.

The most challenging part of this project was to find a balance between keeping the leaflet general enough to address as many families as possible without making it too impersonal at the same time. Because the target group is very varied when it comes both to gender identities and family structures, too specific instructions and tips would further alienate those that would not fit into the picture whereas too broad tips would not feel useful to majority of the clients. Also the descriptions about shock and possible crisis had to be both informative and wide enough at the same time. The cross-sectional theme on this leaflet was the acceptance and acknowledgment of the validity of the spouses' feelings and that had to be included into every section of the leaflet.

Although I already had prior knowledge regarding the gender minorities I feel this project has helped me to form a clearer picture of how one person's gender identity has an effect on the whole family. I feel this newly acquired view will help me to see my future clients as part of their community both as giving and as receiving end of support and strength.

References

Boenke, M. (ed.) Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones. Third edition. PFLAG Transgender Network.

Coulshed, V. and Orme, J. (2012) Social Work Practice. 5th Edition. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.

Gender (n.d.) Merriam-Webster. Internet Document. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/gender>> Read 24.10.2014.

Gender Identity (2012) Wikipedia. Internet document. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_identity> Read 1.12.2012.

Grollman, E. A. (2010) Transgender, Genderqueer, Cisgender... What Do These Terms Mean? Kinsey Confidential. Sexual Health Information from Kinsey Institute. Internet document. <<http://kinseyconfidential.org/transgender-genderqueer-cisgender-terms/>> Read 24.10.2014.

Kuosmanen, J. & Jämsä, J. (toim.) (2007) Suomalaiset sateenkaariperheet sosiaali- ja terveyspalveluissa ja koulussa. SEIS – Suomi eteenpäin ilman syrjintää –julkaisu, Työministeriö. Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy.

Liekki, T-R. (2014) Pride-kulkueessa ennätysmäärä osallistujia. Yle Uutiset. Internet document. <http://yle.fi/uutiset/pride-kulkueessa_ennatysmaara_osallistujia/7326515> Read 10.10.2014.

Lönnqvist, J. (2009) Stressi ja depressio. Terveyskirjasto. Internet document. Updated 19.1.2009. <http://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p_artikkeli=seh00020> Read 10.10.2014.

Mattila, A. S. (2010) Stressi. Terveyskirjasto. Internet document. Published 18.8.2010. <http://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p_artikkeli=dlk00976> Read 10.10.2014.

Mikä sateenkaariperhe? (n. d.) Sateenkaariperheet ry. Internet document. <<http://www.sateenkaariperheet.fi/index.php?item=68>> Read 10.10.2014.

Payne, M. (2014) Modern Social Work Theory. 4th Edition. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.

Rainbow families (n.d.) Sateenkaariperheet ry. Internet document. <<http://www.sateenkaariperheet.fi/index.php?lang=ENG>> Read 10.10.2014.

Rivers, M. (2008) Shock and Confusion – With Love. In Boenke, M. (ed.) Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones. Third edition. PFLAG Transgender Network.

Yhdistyksen esittely (n.d.) Sateenkaariperheet ry. Internet document.
<<http://www.sateenkaariperheet.fi/index.php?item=82>> Read 11.10.2014

Sateenkaariperheet ry:n perhepoliittiset tavoitteet vuosille 2014-2019 (22.3.2014)
Sateenkaariperheet ry. Internet document.
<http://www.sateenkaariperheet.fi/userfiles/documents/VAHVISTETTU_Sateenkaariperheet_ry_n_perhepoliittiset_tavoitteet_vuosille_20142019.pdf> Read 19.10.2014.

Sateenkaariperheet tuovat väriä tilastoihin (2013) Statistics Finland. Internet document. <http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2013/art_2013-09-23_001.html?s=0> Read 19.10.2014.

Transgender Terminology (n.d.) Center of Excellence for Transgender Health. Internet document. <<http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=protocol-terminology>> Read 2.12.2012.

Trevithick, P. (2012) Social Work Skills and Knowledge. A Practise Handbook. 3rd Edition. Open University Press. Glasgow.

Mikä trans? Sukupuolen moninaisuus?

Sukupuolen moninaisuus ilmaisulla viitataan siihen, että sukupuoli on moninainen ilmiö, jossa ei ole kyse vain kahdesta, toisilleen vastakkaisesta sukupuolesta, vaan jatkumosta, jonka eri äärilaitojen välille yksilöt asettuvat.

Transsukupuolinen – henkilö, jonka sukupuoli-identiteetti on eri kuin anatominen sukupuoli, ja joka sen vuoksi käy mahdollisesti läpi sukupuolenkorjausprosessin, jossa keho korjataan vastaamaan sukupuolen kokemusta.

Transvestiitti on henkilö, jonka on mahdollista eläytyä useampaan kuin yhteen sukupuoleen ja ilmentää sukupuolta pukeutumalla välillä niin sanotun toisen sukupuolen vaatteisiin.

Transgender – henkilö, joka ei samastu täysin kumpaankaan sukupuoleen. Eri transgenderien kokemukset omasta kehosta voivat olla hyvinkin erilaisia: joku voi samastua eri sukupuoleen kuin hänet on syntymän jälkeen määritetty tuntematta tarvetta korjata sukupuolen ruumiillisia merkkejä leikkauksin, toinen voi mieltää, ettei kuulu kumpaankaan yleisimmin ajateltuun sukupuoleen vaan on sukupuoleltaan jotakin aivan muuta.

Parhaan käsityksen ihmisen sukupuoli-kokemuksesta saa keskustelemalla hänen kanssaan siitä, miten hän kokee itsensä ja miten hän haluaa tulla kohdatuksi. Voi olla, että hän on jakanut tunteensa sukupuoliristiriidastaan kumppaninsa kanssa vaikka ei itse (vielä) tiedä, mikä termi tuntuu omimmalta, ei ole tutustunut termistöön tai ei koe tarvetta määritellä itseään jollakin tietyllä sanalla.

Lisätietoa ja tukea

Sateenkaariperheet ry on lastensuojelu- ja perhejärjestö, joka tekee

- Ihmisoikeustyötä
- Perhepolitiikan kehittämistyötä
- Lapsi-, nuoriso- ja perhetyötä
- Sosiaali-, terveys- ja koulutuspalveluiden kehittämistyötä
- Moninaisuuskasvatustyötä

Yhdistyksen tarkoituksena on sääntöjensä mukaan toimia Suomen sateenkaariperheiden lasten ja vanhempien ja perhettä suunnittelevien sekä vanhemmuudesta, huoltajuudesta ja kasvattajuudesta kiinnostuneiden ihmisten kontaktifoorumina, tukiryhmänä, oikeuksien puolustajana, tiedonvälittäjänä ja edunvalvojana.

Yhdistyksen tavoitteena on laajentaa ns. perinteistä perhekäsitystä. Perhe-käsitteen tulisi kattaa enemmän siitä moninaisuudesta, joka todellisuudessa on olemassa. Tavoitteena on vaikuttaa yhteiskunnalliseen päätöksentekoon silloin, kun käsiteltävänä on sateenkaariperheitä koskevia asioita. Ajatuksena on myös välittää asiallista ja paikkansapitävää tietoa koskien lesbo-, bi-, trans- ja homovanhempia ja heidän perheitään.

www.sateenkaariperheet.fi

Setan Transtukipiste on sukupuolen moninaisuuden asiantuntija Suomessa. Transtukipiste tarjoaa tukea transihmisille, sukupuoltaan pohtiville ja heidän läheisilleen. Transtukipiste on toiminut yhteisön voimavarana vuodesta 1994.

www.transtukipiste.fi

Kun kumppani onkin transihminen

Ihmisen sukupuoli nähdään yleensä muuttumattomana ja pysyväenä. Lisäksi se on usein tärkeässä roolissa ihmissuhteita ja perheitä muodostettaessa.

Voikin olla järkytys, jos oma kumppani kertoo, että hän ei ehkä koekaan kuuluvansa siihen sukupuoleen, johon hänen on tähän asti oletettu kuuluvan.

Tämä esite on tarkoitettu sinulle, jonka kumppani on kertonut juuri sinulle uutta tietoa sukupuolikokemuksestaan...

Mitä ihmettä?

Kun kumppani on juuri saanut kuulla transihmisyydestä, ajatukset voivat olla hyvinkin sekavat. Ihan aluksi asia voi olla kumppanille niin uusi/haastava/järkyttävä, ettei sitä osaa edes pukea sanoiksi, eikä löydä oikeita sanoja kuvaamaan tilannetta. On normaalia, että kumppani ei heti ymmärrä tai sisäistä, mistä koko ”transasiassa” on itse asiassa kyse. Aihe voi tuntua hyvin oudolta ja vieraalta, varsinkin jos ei ole ennen kuullut sukupuolen moninaisuudesta. Jos koko asia tulee yllätyksenä, voi shokki olla ensimmäinen reaktio.

Sokki on ihmisen ”normaali” reaktio isojen muutosten edessä. Sokki viestii yllätyksestä ja pysähtymisestä. Vasta sen jälkeen ihminen siirtyy varsinaiseen reagointiin, johon usein kuuluvat isona osana voimakkaat tunteet. Asian käsittely ja työstäminen alkaa vasta tunnemyrksyn jälkeen. Käsittelyn loppuvaiheessa uudet tunteet ja asiat järjestäytyvät vähitellen yhtenäiseksi kokemukseksi uudesta tilanteesta. Kaikki puoliset eivät käy läpi kaikkia vaiheita ja jotkut eivät yhtäkään. Osa on saattanut ohittaa alkuvaiheet pienimuotoisesti jo silloin kun arvasivat etukäteen, mistä on kyse. Joillekin kumppaneille sukupuolen moninaisuus ja sen ilmitulo omassa ihmissuhteessa ei välttämättä ole lainkaan iso asia. Myös kaikki reaktiot näiden ääripäiden välillä ovat mahdollisia ja hyväksyttäviä.

Usein oma tapa elää ja olla ei löydy ihan heti vaan sen etsimiseen tarvitaan kokeilua ja testausta. Joskus oma puoliso voi olla peili, jonka kanssa voi testata, mikä tuntuu hyvältä. Joskus taas puolisolalle kertominen tapahtuu vasta, kun asia on jo ”valmiiksi pohdittu”. Toisille voi riittää, että omasta sukupuolikokemuksestaan kertoo ainoastaan omalle puolisolleen. Joku toinen taas haluaa, että koko hänen elinympäristönsä on tietoinen hänen sukupuolikokemuksestaan ja toiveestaan tulla kohdatuksi tämän kokemuksen mukaisesti myös ”ulkomaailmassa”.

Pari/monisuhde & elämä, miten tästä eteenpäin?

Ei ole olemassa yhtä ainoaa oikeaa tapaa reagoida muutoksiin pari- ja monisuhteisissa. Vaikka kriisi yleensä liitetäänkin negatiivisiin tapahtumiin, myös positiiviset tapaukset voivat aiheuttaa kriisejä. Ei ole myöskään rajattu, kuka ”saa” kriisiytyä. Kriisi voi toimia mielen välineenä käsitellä muutosta. Transprosessissa sekä transihmisellä että puolisollla voi olla omat erilliset kriisinsä, jotka eivät välttämättä kulje keskenään samassa tahdissa. Lisäksi muutokset ovat haaste parisuhteelle, joka sekin saattaa kokea kriisinsä.

Tieto kumppanin sukupuolikokemuksesta saattaa vaikuttaa suhteen dynamiikkaan, vaikka mitään ulkoisia muutoksia ei olisikaan havaittavissa. Toisaalta voi olla, että ulkoisesti suurilta vaikuttavat muutokset eivät näy suhteen sisällä juuri lainkaan.

On täysin sallittua tuntea hämmennystä oman ja puolison seksuaalisuuden suhteen. Seksuaalinen kiinnostus on läheisessä yhteydessä sukupuolen ja sukupuolikokemuksen kanssa. ”Uusi” kokemus sukupuolesta voi tuoda mukanaan seksuaalisen suuntautumisen kyseenalaistamista ja pohdintaa niin kumppanille kuin sukupuoltaan koskevista ajatuksista kertoneelle osapuolellekin.

Sukupuoleltaan moninainen ihminen voi kokea kehoristiriitansa erityisen vahvasti läheisyyden ja seksuaalisen kanssakäynnin hetkissä. Nämä tunteet voivat olla hyvin vahvoja ja aiheuttaa voimakkaita reaktioita, jotka usein hämmentävät puolisoa.

Miten puhua lapsille? Entä jos niitä ei ole vielä?

Lapselle suurin shokki ei yleensä ole vanhemman ”muuttuva” sukupuoli vaan sen mukanaan tuomat ristiriidat esim. vanhempien välillä. Saattaa siis olla, että vanhempien pelkäämä kaapista tulo onkin lapselle helpotus, koska se selittää kotona vallinneen kireän tunnelman. Jokainen lapsi reagoi kuitenkin eri tavalla.

Lapselle on tärkeää viestittää, että hän ei ole syyppää muutoksiin tai esim. vanhempien kireisiin väleihin. Lapsille tulisi taata turvallisuuden ja jatkuvuuden tunne myös yllättävien muutosten keskellä. Lapsi voi esimerkiksi tutustua vanhemman ”uuteen” sukupuoleen pikkuhiljaa tai hänelle tarjotaan mahdollisuus puhua sen herättämistä tunteista turvallisen aikuisen (kummi, sukulainen jne.) kanssa.

Sukupuolen moninaisuudesta voi puhua lapsen kanssa erilaisten kuvien ja tarinoiden avulla. Esimerkiksi tyttö- ja poikapiparimuoteilla piirrettyjä hahmoja voi värittää eri väreillä.

”Isä näyttää nyt pojalta (muotti), mutta tuntee olevansa tyttö (punainen väri)”