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Abstract

Identity Conflict or Performance Anxiety?

The study focusses on how sexual performance anxiety can be confused with gender identity disturbance. Human sexuality is an extremely complex concept which contains numerous aspects. When we speak about sexual disturbances we are talking about symptoms and problems which compromise an individual's sex life at various levels. These disturbances can be said to involve three aspects of sexuality: the sex act, the perceived identity and sexual fantasies.

Our study analyses the differences between the fundamental gender identity, gender identity and gender role. Fundamental gender identity is the subjective sense of awareness of belonging to a specific sex, that is the consciousness that "I am a female" or "I am a male". Gender identity is the inner sense of femininity or masculinity. Gender role is the objective public expression of being female, male or androgyne (mixed). Subjects with gender identity disturbances (disorder) perceive a serious incongruency between their anatomical sex and their identity.

Clinical cases were examined in which behind an apparent identity conflict lay a sexual performance anxiety and the importance was thus shown of making a careful and complete anamnestic analysis in order to provide a correct interpretation of the symptom and for the choice of appropriate psycho-therapy.