

December 19, 2022

To: CAMFT Therapist Magazine

Re: Letters to the Editor submission

From: Rick McCarthy, MFT

Time to “Pump the Brakes”

In response to The Therapists’ November 2022 Professional Exchange article by Gretchen Anne Cooper, LMFT, I must object to her entire premise regarding “gender affirming care”, including her demonstrated lack of ethics, wisdom, and understanding of child development.

As a retired professor of 28 years, and an MFT for over four decades, I have witnessed a number of useless theories and fads over the years, and sadly, a devolving of our practice by the political and ideological forces of our culture, as well as the rejection of wisdom and rigorous scientific research.

Ms. Cooper noted, and rightly so, of the “hesitancy” of her colleagues to work with the transgender youth because of the legal and ethical ramifications. I would hope that most of my colleagues of sound mind and body would think twice before encouraging an immature, and already confused and overwhelmed child to alter and mutilate their bodies, potentially causing irreversible and irreparable physical and emotional harm. Even most decent parents understand the wisdom of laws in most states that prevent youth from driving, drinking, getting a tattoo, or even getting their ears pierced before they have sufficiently developed their higher cognitive functions and attain the ability to actually exercise informed consent.

Could we at least agree on a more sober and balanced approach, such as encouraged by the Gender Exploratory Therapy Association (GETA). As opposed to the present “gender affirming” model which quickly accepts the immature client’s self-diagnosis, then placing them on the fast track towards transitioning, GETA promotes an “exploratory” approach which does not steer the client towards any particular outcome.

As we hopefully approach all of our clients, particular attention should be paid towards clarifying, evaluating, and treating all of the conscious and unconscious psychological, family, social, and often traumatic components of the child’s history that have led them to their present dilemma.

Rick McCarthy, MFT