

# Daphne scholinski the last time i wore a dress

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Daphne Scholinski's memoir *The Last Time I Wore A Dress* is a touching narrative of a girl who was misunderstood. Throughout her childhood and young adulthood, Daphne struggled with identifying with her feelings. Daphne was constantly searching for an answer to why she felt different. Daphne wanted to "fit in" but she knew she was unconventional. The different labels she was given through out her psychiatric stay stuck with her and left a scar of how she was once perceived. Daphne had very low self esteem through out her childhood. This is because her parents ignored her and gave her little affection. She didn't even notice when I walked out of her apartment, ran down the stairs," (Scholinski 4). Her self esteem was worse at her dad's house than her mom's, however, her relationship with Frank made her very uncomfortable when she would travel into Chicago because she didn't want to see him. Daphne wanted to be tough; when she hung out on the streets with her gang she needed everyone around her to see her toughness. Her gang saw that she was strong in side and out; this made them respect her. The respect shown by the gang is why Daphne tries to act tough at every new place she goes.

Daphne wants to gain respect from them. Daphne knows she looks like a boy but the tough persona given off by this makes Daphne accept it. The people around Daphne treat her like a boy. "I landed a punch on Louis' shoulder and he was dead serious looking at me, trying to figure out how to come back at me, but I had him blocked and he decided I passed and Joey agreed," (Scholinski 71). The Disciples gives her positive feedback about her boyish look and behavior, this is why she enjoys those memories. However her Dad and Mom are confused by it and they don't know what to do with her.

Her fellow patient's have their own problems so Daphne's gender issue doesn't bother them, although the Doctor's are highly concerned. At every psychiatric facilities that she is a patient at the Dr. 's try to break ground with the issue with Daphne. As soon as this happens Daphne losses trust in them and she starts to pull away. She know that this is the root of her problem and she try's to avoid it at all costs. She is afraid of their perception of her and if she will have to change. Daphne goes through ametamorphosis through her memoir. As a child she acts the way she feels so she is only doing what is natural to her. Because there s violence in her house she acts violent and because she feels like a boy she dresses like a boy. She viewed her as tough and that doesn't change. However her thoughts of being an under achiever change after her self esteem is restored, which doesn't fully happen until her stay at the Wilson Center. The Wilson Center is where she has the best perceptions of herself; she feels independent, smart, fun, and friendly. Daphne had a very hard time understanding her thoughts and feelings until the Wilson Center. The patients are who gave Daphne strength, the positive environment let Daphne explore who she was and relax and have fun.

The Wilson center represents the adolescence that she should have had. The Dr. 's still make her feel uncomfortable when the gender issue arrises but Daphne can cop with it better because she likes where she is. Meeting Valerie led her to discover her homosexual feelings. It wasn't the initial meeting of Valerie but later in Daphne's life she released her true feelings towards women which is the biggest change of all. The reason why Daphne was originally admitted into the Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center

is due to the fact that her parents couldn't and didn't want to handle her anymore.

Her violent outbursts and rude behavior was in response to the way her Dad treated her but also her own frustrations dealing with her identity crises on her own. The Dr. 's viewed her gender non-conformity as a bad habit and wanted Daphne to change her appearance. Daphne new that if she changed her appearance the Doctors wouldn't bother her about it anymore. However Daphne couldn't do this because its not how she felt. The Doctor's viewed Daphne as choosing to act this way not Daphne needing to act this way. Eachcultureestablishes gender ideals and the people within that culture follow them.

The non-conformist in some cases, like Daphne, are prosecuted for not complying. I feel that this is wrong, To make everyone fit into a type is not necessary because not everyone likes those choices. Daphne was only doing what felt best for her and their is nothing wrong with wanting to feel comfortable. Making Daphne wear makeup for points didn't do anything in the long run because Daphne didn't change her ways. Rules like these are the essentialist beliefs that ruled all of the institutions. The essentialist beliefs in the institutions was boys should act and dress like " boys" and girls needed to act and dress like " girl".

Michael Reese facility wanted Daphne to wear tighter fitting clothes, nicer shirts, and act girly. Daphne conformed and like the extra attention from boys but I feel like this confused her and led to why she didn't like being there. During her entire stay at Michael Reese she wasn't fully being herself

creating another identity so she wouldn't have to face herself. Another essentialist belief of the institutions is if you do what we, the staff, says you will get better. At Forest Hospital Daphne was even farther away from herself at first. Daphne lied about drug addiction and they wouldn't believe her when she said she lied.

They wanted her to tell the truth but she was and this caused a major conflict for Daphne. Daphne viewed institutions such as family and school with little to no trust. This is because she felt that they failed her. "How come no one ever says school is failing me?" (Scholinski 15). Instead she received a you failed them attitude from everyone. Her lack of trust towards her family is because they were not affectionate towards her and instead gave her the violent tendencies she struggles with. Violence is a theme that dictated a lot of Daphne's problems.

Her Dad was verbally and physically abusive and this environment didn't give Daphne and her sister the love they needed. Her Mom was not violent towards Daphne, however, where her mom lived allowed Daphne to find other outlets for her budding violent behavior, such as the Disciples. These violent actions she took part in allowed Daphne to act out her frustration with in herself, although her parents eventually couldn't handle her anymore and turned her over to Michael Reese. Through out her psychiatric stay Daphne used violence to gain respect because this is the only way she knew how to gain it.

As Daphne changed and began to understand herself her violent actions diminished. The Trials and the Triumphs of the Transgendered explains

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the anxiety and depression that can come as baggage to a gender crisis.

Daphne dealt with this her entire life because she nor anyone else knew how to categorize her. This research article also explains the questions that one has to manage on a daily basis because of their gender disassociation. Along with the standards of care for Gender Identity Disorders, “ because dysphoria is currently listed as a psychological disorder, transgendered people are assumed to be mentally ill,” (Moffic 3).

Moffic gives tips at the end to help Doctor’s with patients that have gender Identity disorders. Daphne’s doctor’s would have benefited from confronting staff about prejudicial behaviors, empower their patients to the discussions, and keep transgender possibility in mind. Daphne’s doctor’s were fixated on changing Daphne to an average girl. When in instead they should have been guiding Daphne to have her be able to understand why she is this way and that there’s nothing wrong with it. Daphne’s struggles was an insightful look at how you can’t change what feels right for you.

Through out Daphne’s life she was drawn to being a boy. Instead of changing how she felt she learned that this is good for her. This is how people should view gender identity disorders but people are afraid of the unknown.

Daphne’s strength is paving the way to new thinking and understanding of this disorder. The LGBT has come a long way and everyday their efforts to inform us on how they want to be treated equally is allowing them to gain more acceptance. Our society is slowly changing for the better and hopefully one day LGBT won’t have any labels.