

Press Release

6th February 2023

Understanding Gender Identity and Reducing the Stress Surrounding It

The issues of gender identity and trans rights currently consume more news space than almost any other topic. The debate over the Equality Act and women's rights rages and has become increasingly polarised and toxic, yet the quality of the information provided is often glaringly inaccurate. Worse still, the understanding of the subject as displayed by politicians and social commentators is often sketchy. Meanwhile, trans people and their families experience increasing levels of stress as the debate over their clinical treatment and rights continues to be the object of public scrutiny.

The International Stress Management Association (ISMA^{UK}) are hosting their second Masterclass of 2023 on the vexed subject of gender identity and how we can help those who are struggling with it, while at the same time assisting practitioners, who may have clients facing similar challenges, made worse by poorly informed public debate and lack of understanding in society.

Transforming Lives

The speaker at this Masterclass is Shelley Bridgman MSc, a specialist in transformational change who has been working with young people and adults challenged by their gender identity for over 25 years. Having overcome personal failure in her own life and achieved success as a sought-after coach, psychotherapist and hypnotherapist, Shelley has helped thousands of people embrace their authentic selves and transform their lives. Simon Hawtrey-Woore, an executive coach who is passionate about the power of collaboration to open up fresh perspectives, will moderate the discussion.

Gender dysphoria isn't a mental illness but it can give rise to mental health problems, affecting many aspects of life, impairing the ability to function at school or at work and leading to social isolation. Fear of stigma and lack of access to experienced care providers can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression and stress. Research shows that people with gender dysphoria have a higher risk of suicide than the general population¹. Shelley will talk about how we can help people feel more comfortable in their identity, learning how to manage stress and practise self-acceptance. She will also discuss diagnosis, treatment pathways and building support networks.

Helping People Feel More Fulfilled

Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA^{UK}, said, "We are very proud to be hosting this Masterclass devoted to gender identity and the stressful effects it can have on those affected. The discrimination that people with gender dysphoria can experience and the conditions it may

cause, including anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders and other mental health problems, require specialist understanding and treatment, so that people feel more fulfilled and can improve their quality of life. As the lead professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance, ISMA^{UK} are committed to helping people overcome stigma and other difficulties, so that they feel more comfortable with their identity and gender expression.”

¹ [What is Gender Dysphoria?](#) by Kendra Cherry, Very Well Mind, September 2022

Notes for Editors

Understanding Gender Identity: How Can Its Stressful Effects Be Reduced?

For more information about ISMA^{UK}'s online Masterclass, *Understanding Gender Identity: How Can Its Stressful Effects Be Reduced?*, being held on Thursday 23rd February, go to <https://isma.org.uk/monthly-masterclass-events>. Places may be booked in advance here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/understanding-gender-identity-how-can-its-stressful-effects-be-reduced-tickets-535913209837>. Masterclasses are free to ISMA^{UK} members. Non-members are asked to pay £10 per Masterclass.

About Shelley Bridgman MSc

Drawing on her unconventional life experiences, Shelley delivers inspirational and transformative messages that captivate audiences. From building (and losing) a business, to becoming a successful stand-up comedian, to breakdown and attempted suicide, Shelley's life experiences have shaped who she is and her approach to speaking about transformational change, and what happens when we stop wearing a mask and become who we already are. She has been featured on BBC TV, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 2, Sky News, Channel 4 and Channel 5, as well as in magazines. For more information visit <https://shelleybridgman.com/>

About ISMA^{UK}

ISMA^{UK} is the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance, promoting sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, resilience, wellbeing and mental health for over 30 years. ISMA^{UK} practitioners and consultants provide stress management services, including flexible training courses and coaching to individuals and businesses in both the private and public sectors, assisting around 40,000 people who need professional help with stress-related issues every year. ISMA^{UK} endorses and uses the HSE guidelines for managing stress in the workplace. To find out more about ISMA^{UK}, visit www.isma.org.uk.

Press Interviews

For all press and media enquiries please contact Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA^{UK}, for an immediate response on +44 (0) 77 688 78910 or at chair@isma.org.uk.