

# Ask Matt: Do I Owe My Parents Grandchildren?

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## Abstract

*A reader writes: “I am a 24-year-old transgender girl. I started transition about a year and a half ago, with one month in between where I had major doubts and confusion about my life. “I have asked myself, am I doing the right thing? Am I really transgender? Maybe I am just fooling myself. Should [...]*

## Article

A reader writes:

*“I am a 24-year-old transgender girl. I started transition about a year and a half ago, with one month in between where I had major doubts and confusion about my life.*

*“I have asked myself, am I doing the right thing? Am I really transgender? Maybe I am just fooling myself. Should I simply live a life male and cross dress? But the one question that sent me down a spiraling hole of regret was, and is, ‘Am I betraying my mother and father by transitioning?’*

*“I will likely - probably never - produce a baby, a grandchild, for them. During that frightful time of transition, I was reviewing this over and over, going through a bout of depression and into dark places. I felt like a fraud, that somehow I had an innate obligation to father a child for my parents or whichever wife I would have married.*

*“To a degree I still feel this way, and I don’t know if this will ever go away. I don’t know if I will ever accept not becoming the paradigm of a son. So maybe I’m looking for your viewpoint on this by writing such a question for you, because all I really have is my own perspective.”*

My mother always used to say that the only thing children owe their parents is to outlive them. I’m not sure that this is true, but I do believe that children do not owe their parents grandchildren.

In Western culture, and probably others as well, there is a specific “life timeline” that society has established, and it appears that, over many decades, it has not wavered. We are supposed to grow up, get some type of schooling or training, get a job, get married, have children, raise those children, retire, then die, hopefully leaving some money and a few halfway decent possessions to our children.

This blueprint for life benefits society. It keeps us focused on our own personal timeline, it keeps us productive at work, it keeps a lot of people employed (many at relatively low wages), and it keeps us from rabble rousing by coming up with other possibilities for ourselves.

Of course, continuing the species is a necessity if the species is to survive - but there are plenty of people doing that. Not everyone is needed in the endeavor, and if everyone pitched in, we would not be able to sustain the world that we have now. We are barely clinging on by our fingernails as it is.

I also believe that many of us feel a biological imperative to pass on our DNA. This is an innate survival mechanism. From an evolutionary perspective, if we weren't biologically programmed to pass on our DNA, we would not be so interested in childbearing or child rearing, and the species would suffer. But again, many other people are handling this, and not all of us are intimately tied to our own genetics.

Not everyone has children. Some people can't and some don't want to. In many cultures, those who were not parents played important roles in society, including childcare, because it really does take a village to raise a child. Producing children is not a requirement of being born yourself.

So the short answer is that you are not responsible to the world, your parents, or a hypothetical future wife to provide children. Reproducing is not your duty as a human being, or as a son or daughter. You don't even know for sure that you could father, or could have fathered, children. Not everyone can. And perhaps you could, but possibly not in conjunction with the hypothetical future wife. There's simply no way to know.

And there's no way for your parents to know, either, so if they are giving you grief about this, you have to work through that - with them and with yourself. When we have children, as your parents did, there are no guarantees with regard to what they will and won't do throughout their lives.

They might choose the path we want for them and they might not. They might give us grandchildren and they might not. Hopefully, we realize this when we have them, and although we might have high hopes for the direction they will take in life, we also have to come to terms with the fact that we do not control any of this, including their desire or ability to reproduce.

It's possible that all your other doubts - are you doing the right thing, are you really transgender, should you live as a male and cross dress - are the result of your feelings about this particular issue. If you could alleviate the guilt you feel about not providing grandchildren to your parents, all your other questioning might be resolved as well.

And just because you have transitioned does not mean that you will never have children - if you want them. There are many children available for adoption, and, depending on where you live, your trans status might not be a hindrance in this regard.

You also might meet a partner in the future who already has children, and you would then become a stepmother or a mother figure for these children. Either of these possibilities - adoption or stepparenting - would give your parents grandchildren. But you should not live your life with an eye toward this unless you yourself want children someday.

I think, as much as your parents might want grandchildren, they will ultimately realize that what they want even more is for their child to be happy. Once they understand this, they will be able to let go of their need for biological grandchildren - or maybe any grandchildren.

And if they are not pressuring you - if this is your concern alone, and they have given no indication of unhappiness about this particular issue - then you will need to work through it and let it go. Again, you don't owe them this.

Probably the best thing you could give them is to live an authentic and (reasonably) happy life. And, as my mom said, you can try to outlive them - although even this is not a guarantee.

Regardless, you need to let this one go. I wish you the best of luck.

What do readers think?

Cross-posted from Tranifesto

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