

What No One Ever Told You About "Gender-Affirming Care" | with Dr. Jay Richards

(October 24, 2023)

FRANK:

Welcome to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, our midweek podcast. What is it like to try and transition from one sex to another? It's actually biologically impossible, but people try it. We're here with Dr. Jay Richards of The Heritage Foundation. Jay is very interested and a leader on this topic of gender ideology, how to deal with it, not only morally but also politically. Jay, the last podcast we did, we covered a lot of ground. But we didn't quite get to, what can we do about it? Before we get there, though, I want to ask you, you mentioned in your talk here at the Southern Evangelical Seminary Steadfast conference that there's kind of four steps that people go through if they try and transition. What are those four steps and describe what happens?

JAY:

Absolutely. So, this is the phrase gender-affirming care. So, what that is, that's the covering term for a protocol, which is really a pathway of different interventions. And so, under gender-affirming care, it's really gender identity affirming treatment is what it is. You start with social transition. So, that basically means, usually in schools and often behind parent's backs, the child's name is changed. So, let's say a boy that identifies as a girl. Give them a female name, have everyone use his female pronouns when referring to him. He goes and uses the women's restroom, the whole nine yards. Then followed by, if the child's young enough, puberty blockers.

And so, these are the drugs that basically freeze what would otherwise be kind of natural development in puberty to sort of stop that. Because it's in puberty, that our secondary sex characteristics really come online. Certain things grow. Women develop breasts. You know, your facial hair if you're male, your voice goes down, and those kinds of things. That happens under the influence of either testosterone for males, or basically estrogen for women.

And then of course, women start to menstruate and all that stuff. And so, puberty blockers prevent that from happening and then the cross- sex hormones force the body artificially, to go down the other kind of pathway. So that if you're a male, and you take high levels of estrogen, your testosterone is suppressed. You can start to grow things that look like breasts. Your body can start to change a little bit so that you look like a female.

If you're a female and you do this, of course, with testosterone your voice will go down, and you'll end up with an Adam's apple that you wouldn't have had otherwise. Your body composition changes. Musculature, facial hair, all those kinds of things. What of course you don't do is actually grow sex organs. That's not possible. But you get these kind of superficial



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sex traits. And so then, after a period of time you do transition surgeries. And so, think of this. These aren't sex-change surgeries, they're sex trait modifications.

FRANK:

Say that again.

JAY:

Sex trait modification. So, you're modifying the things that we would visually associate with one or the other sexes. Bruce Jenner did this. So, we could see it in real time. He had, you know, shaved his Adam's apple down. And there's actually things you can do to the bones in your face with surgery. Remove body parts, so if you're a male, move the penis and testicles. And then so what do you do if you want to create a facsimile on the other side? And I know this is going to get a bit graphic. But of course, so for females they get top surgery, which means the removal, total removal of their breasts. It's not just a normal mastectomy that a woman might have if she had breast cancer because the male chest looks different. So, you have to reconstruct what the chest looks like, put the nipples at a different spot. And so, it's a really, really invasive surgery.

And then bottom surgery is where you go about doing the same kind of things with the genitalia. So, with a female, let's just stick with the female. In that case, a woman of course is going to have a vagina and doesn't have a penis. So, what do you do? Well, your doctors will close up the vagina, and then you create what's called a neophallus. So, it's a fake penis, effectively. And there's a couple of different ways of doing this. You can use part of the colon, which is not a great way to do it, or the skin, and the nerves, and some of the muscle from the forearm. So, you literally orphan the thigh. So, you take out a big chunk of skin, and muscle, and nerves, and blood vessels from the arm or the thigh, and then you attach it to the abdomen of the girl, and sort of form it so that it's like the shape of a penis.

That's not going to have the function of the penis. There's not going to be testicles. You're not going to be able to function right as a man. The idea is that you're kind of creating the kind of surface appearance of that. Now, I have described this in very kind of generic terms. What we're talking about, though, is massively, massively invasive surgery that has all sorts of complications. Chloe Cole, for instance, the detransitioner, I think it's been three years now since she had top surgery and then stopped there, and detransitioned. But she has still not healed. So, she's still struggling with her scars, and complications.

You can only imagine the complications if you're spending a lifetime taking cross-sex hormones, so hormones different from what your body wants, effectively. We literally do not know the long-term effects of this. We don't know. We haven't done it. Give a child puberty blockers at 13. Put her on testosterone at 14. At 16, cut off her breasts, do all this other stuff. And then what happens 40 years out? We do not know because we're running an uncontrolled, real-time experiment on children. And I haven't even talked about all of the risk factors and physical problems that result from these hormonal interventions.

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FRANK:

What are some of the side effects?

JAY:

Well, for women, testosterone can increase dangers from blood-pressure from stroke, osteoporosis, heart disease, all the kinds of things that you would imagine. I mean, what's funny is that if there's ever been a time in culture when we are more acutely aware of the dangers of say, artificial hormones in the water. You know, I've got friends that won't touch receipts in grocery stores because they're afraid it's estrogenic.

In one sense, we're aware that there might be bad side effects to this. But then we're countenancing giving a teenage girl 200 milligrams of testosterone every day. What do you think is going to happen? There's no doubt in my mind that there are going to be cancers that would otherwise not be a problem will be a severe problem. But the reality is at the moment, I mean, we just don't know. We'll know in 20 years.

FRANK:

This is Frankenstein.

JAY:

Oh, absolutely it is. And it'll be obvious that it was Frankenstein in 10 or 15 years. We will not keep doing this.

FRANK:

Well, they've already stopped in the UK to a certain extent because those gender clinics have people like Chloe Cole, who wasn't there. But people like her over there are now suing them for what they've done. It's horrific, and people, politically, there are some people out there who think this is a good idea and that children have the right to do this, even without their parental consent. The kid can't get an aspirin in school. But if she wants to take hormone blockers, she can do so?

JAY:

That's right. And it depends on what state you're in. Because of course, now we're going to be this weird kind of patchwork federalism in which you're going to have states like California, where child protective services can take a child away from her parents if the parents don't affirm her new gender identity. And then other states, thank the Lord, have now put a stop to this. Tennessee is one. In fact, there are basically about 23 states, almost half the states in the U.S.

FRANK:

This has just happened very recently, right?

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JAY:

We had one in 2021. It was Arkansas, Alabama in 2022. And then another 21 in 2023 have passed laws.

FRANK:

And so, when you hear the left talking about all these anti-LGBTQ bills, this is what they're talking about.

JAY:

This is what we're talking about. First of all, we're not talking about LGB at all. That has nothing to do with this. And in fact, okay, little known fact, and people on the left that are opposed to gender ideology will tell you this. A lot of kids that are now interpreting their experience as being born in the wrong body are kids that have same-sex attraction. And so, they'll say, okay, well, how do I interpret this?

And so, a lot of people say, you know, this might be a kid that just had same-sex attraction and so would maybe identify as gay, now suddenly gets, you know, set on the transition pathway. And so, that's the kind of interesting thing about this story is that the LGBT coalition has very much broken down. If you think about it, the L, the G and the B. So, that's lesbian, gay, bi-sexual. Those categories only make sense if there's sex, if there's sexual binaries.

FRANK:

They don't exist if the T's get their way.

JAY:

What's a lesbian if there's no women?

FRANK:

What's a heterosexual?

JAY:

Yeah, what is this? Yeah, it makes no sense. The T's deny the basic kind of coherence of the L's, the G's, and the B's. And a lot of the kids that are being transitioned are kids that have same-sex attraction. And so, you can see that this is a very weird kind of coalition that doesn't really make a whole lot of sense.

FRANK:

And your predecessor at The Heritage Foundation, Ryan T. Anderson during COVID, I remember this. He had a meeting at The Heritage Foundation, and he had feminists there who were coming out against...

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JAY:

Absolutely. Radical feminists couldn't get a platform. That a perfect example of how different this coalition is. If you were thinking, you know, like, I can tell you Republicans a year and a half ago thought, oh, no. This is a redo of the same-sex marriage debate. And it's like, no, it's not.

FRANK:

Unpack that Jay because people can get discouraged out there. But this is one time in recent history, where we have allies on an issue like this, that we don't have in any other issue. So, explain that.

JAY:

If you just think about it, basically, everything with the sexual revolution was kind of left versus right, effectively. You had social conservatives on one side, kind of everybody else on the other. That was true with same-sex marriage, anybody involved in that debate, you know? It was Ryan, and Catholics, and Mormons, and evangelicals, and Orthodox Jews, and everybody else on the other side. This, though, I mean, basically, if you think biology is real, if you're a feminist that thinks women are a thing, and are different from men, you're with us on this.

And so, that is the reality is that all the kind of coherent social conservatives are part of the coalition and so are the atheist evolutionary biologists and lesbians. There's an organization on Twitter called "Gays Against Groomers," and they breathe fire on this stuff. And so, I'm constantly encouraging, my fellow conservatives. Look, this is really important. First of all, frankly, there aren't enough of us to win any kind of major fights on this stuff. We need as many people as we can get. And on this, they're on the side of the angels. And does that mean I've surrendered my convictions on marriage? No. And I reserve the right to have a long conversation with our allies on that later. But that doesn't mean that we can't win this.

And I think at the moment, because social conservatism has felt like this kind of long series of defeats with the exception of the overturning of Roe v. Wade, just showing that, in fact, the crazy sexual left has gone way too far this time. They're going after kid's minds and bodies, and they're trying to split parents from their children. And we've got to push back. And I really do think on the pediatric gender medicine stuff, we're going to win that, in the sense that those pediatric gender clinics are going to close.

Now, if they don't close by way of public policy solutions, they will close because of civil cases in which the detransitioners will sue them into oblivion. I'm convinced that will happen. I absolutely am certain that will happen. But for me, I don't want to say okay. Let's just wait until that happens. Our job, if we have the ability to do so is to try to limit the damage in so far as we can. It'd be much better that okay, maybe it'll be 100, or 1000, or 10,000 kids that are affected by this. That's better than a million.

And so, I just think of it as we're limiting the damage as much as we can, as policymakers, until they actually get sued into oblivion. And then the evidence is going to be overwhelming that this

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was a mistake. You mentioned the UK. So, the UK has closed its one pediatric gender clinic. But not just the UK. Finland and Sweden are actually ahead of the UK on this. And now just this summer, Denmark, have put the brakes on this stuff. But these are not conservative, right-wing countries. They just looked at the data and did systematic reviews of the evidence.

FRANK:

Now, first of all, what can we do politically first? And then we'll talk about what we can do personally on this issue. You're working hard through The Heritage Foundation. For those of you who don't know, a lot of people think, what do think tanks do all day? Well, actually, they're making policy. And sometimes their policies actually make it into law. So, what can you tell us that you're working on?

JAY:

Absolutely. We've been working on these pediatric gender medicine bills. And in this case, it's a huge coalition of organizations. So, The Family Policy Alliance, which is a kind of umbrella organization of a lot of state family think tanks. It's really great model legislation called "Help Not Harm," was designed for states. And then another new organization called "Do No Harm." The name sounds similar, has a similar piece of legislation called the Just Facts Act. Both of these are grounded in the evidence and set up a way for states to limit that transition pathway. And so, Heritage got behind those and said, okay. This is good model legislation. This is what we're going to support along with all of our allies. That's because there were so many allies working together. That is really the only way that this happened. It wouldn't have happened otherwise.

Lobbyists, family organizations, parents showing up at hearings in state houses. And so, a lot of the important stuff that happens, doesn't happen in Washington, D.C. It happens in state capitals. It happens in school board elections and school board meetings. And the conservatives, we often just kind of think of Washington D.C. We have a federal system, and the states can be a bulwark against the kind of overweening force of the federal government, and they've been that way here. So, the conservative states, the red states have been a kind of harbinger of where I think the other states will eventually go.

But at the moment, the blue states are going in exactly the opposite direction. And they will probably keep doing that until the Democrats suffer electoral defeat in a way that they associate with their connection to this issue. There are already, I'm sure, lots of smart Democrats that realize this is really dumb. This is not popular. But until they actually suffer at the ballot box, I don't think the smart ones will be willing to say, okay, look. We've got to quit listening to these crazy activists.

FRANK:

So, the 23 states have put restrictions on so-called gender affirming care, which is really child mutilation as what, to age 18? I know Tennessee was 26.

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JAY:

That's right. And so, our advice has been, look. Let's focus on one thing at a time. The left is really good at directional, incremental change. The right is not because we're in principle. So, it's like, we've got to have it all now. Nobody can be born in the wrong body. And it's not like when you become 18 you can be born in the wrong body. All true, right? But saying that we're going to restrict it at 18...I'm not saying it's good to do it at 25.

I'm saying that, first of all, it's different. Because we recognize that kids can't consent to certain things. And so, it's one thing, it might be awful. But if you're 40 years old and you want to do this to yourself, that's bad. But it's not the same kind of existential moral crisis that it is for kids. And also, we've got a huge chunk of the population with us as long as we're focusing on the kids. When you start talking about what adults can and can't do, you're basically going to divide the coalition.

FRANK:

You might lose some libertarians.

JAY:

Exactly. And so, why do that? You know, you've got to be able to build a coalition. And so, you want directionally to be able to get these things.

FRANK:

So, how many more states do you think?

JAY:

There are a few left. Unfortunately, yeah. And so, because at places like Wyoming, for instance, it just kind of fumbled. South Carolina, weirdly, it hasn't quite happened yet. I'll say that the bill that passed in Georgia ended up being, it wasn't great.

FRANK:

Yeah, there's no penalty. I just talked to a senator down there.

JAY:

Utterly maddening.

FRANK:

There's no penalty. It's illegal to transition a child. But if you're a doctor and you do it...

JAY:

So, puberty blockers wasn't in it. And they have something like, "but for medical necessity provision" in it, which makes it basically worthless. Yeah. And so, that needs to be strengthened. The Utah Bill, which is the first bill this year, is good, but it can be stronger. That's

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fine, though. Directionally, I was hoping for four in 2023. And so, to have five times that is just, it's extraordinary. And I think this is the year of Guadalcanal and Midway Island in the fight.

FRANK:

Friends, as we said many times on this program, if you love your neighbor, you want to make sure that evil is not done to your neighbor. And obviously, if you haven't figured this out now, it is evil to do this, particularly to children. You need to get behind these kinds of efforts to ensure from a political perspective, that children are not abused this way. And so, what Jay is doing at The Heritage Foundation and what your state legislatures are doing, if you're in a red state, hopefully what your state legislatures are doing in a blue state, you want to contact them too and express how crazy it is to be for genital mutilation or cross-sex hormones for children. It can be done, and it's being done in the sense that we're trying to stop this.

JAY:

We're pushing back and we're retaking territory. We're at that stage of the fight.

FRANK:

What about personally, Jay? What do you recommend our viewers and listeners do personally about this issue? What can they do?

JAY:

The first thing is to sort of understand it. It's just like apologetics, right? You've got to know the argument. But there's just so many good books. Nancy Pearcey's book, 'Love Thy Body.' Great book called 'On the Genesis of Gender' by Abigail Favale. 'When Harry Became Sally,' by Ryan Anderson. There are a dozen really great books on this. So, the first thing is to kind of get what's happening so that you bone up on it. And then, find out in your particular jurisdictions, what's happening. What I mean, well, certainly your family. That's the first thing. Where are your kids? What are they getting exposed to? What are their teachers saying? What's your church saying, by the way. Don't assume that that's safe. And then, what's happening in your school district?

We have overlooked the power of school districts. But there is unbelievable amounts of money that are controlled by local school districts that most conservatives don't even pay attention to. And it's the school districts generally that control the curriculum and the guidelines that are happening in their schools. And so, I mean, this is by the way, I remember it's why conservative parents are being called domestic terrorists is because they're starting to show up at school boards and read from the books that are on the library shelves.

And so, focus on those things that are closer to hand, and then focus on your state legislature. That's absolutely crucial. What happens in the federal government...look, Heritage is just a few 100 yards from the Capitol. We're focused on that. But there is a bunch of stuff that you can do in your family, and in your neighborhood, and your church, and in your community.

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FRANK:

Jay, in the previous podcast we had...and for those of you that haven't listened to that, you need to go back to last week's podcast when we talked about this. You said something that is important for everyone to take on board tactically, when someone asks you a question, you want to ask a question back. So, when someone calls you a transphobe you want to say, what do you mean by that?

JAY:

Don't say, no, I'm not. Don't assume you even know what it means or that they even know what it means.

FRANK:

It seems to me on a personal level, this is the way forward with anyone now. Ask questions. So, if your young daughter comes to you and says, mom, dad, I'm trans. First of all, don't freak out. That's not going to work. But ask questions. What do you mean by trans? Why do you think you're trans?

JAY:

Where did you hear this idea? Do you think that makes sense? Just absolutely unpack it. Because I mean, kids are being bombarded in every direction with this stuff. And honestly, shoring up the anchoring of your children in reality is absolutely crucial. I mean, I have honestly, I have a hypothesis here, Frank, that part of the problem...of course kids are getting it from social media. But also, if you're online all the time, and I'm not a Luddite. But if all you are is online, and your interactions are online, it's a kind of a disembodied existence.

Whereas kids for most of history, you know, were working out in the fields. And you know, there might be kids cleaning out the barns and things like that, dealing in dirt in their bodies. And I think there's just something about the practice itself of an entirely digital existence, that lends itself to the idea that you could be an avatar that's separate from your body, and that's really who you are. And so, I just think that there's something about the practice itself that may be conducive to this error.

FRANK:

Ask a lot of questions, ladies and gentlemen. Also remember, as we said before, that our identity is in Christ. In Christianity, you do not achieve your identity. You receive your identity. It's given to you freely because of His sacrifice. And that identity, you can never lose. You can lose your sexual preference identity, right? You can lose that. You can no longer be able to sexually perform. You no longer have an identity? You can no longer be sexually preferable. You no longer have an identity? No. Those are not solid foundations on which to build an identity. What is solid is Jesus. You can't lose Jesus. So, that's ultimately where all this heads. That's the solution here, Jay.

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JAY:

It is. Just the very idea of an identity, I mean, this is an opportunity for us as Christians. Because that's really what people are asking. What does it mean to be a self? Are you really just this mere psychological entity free-floating from your bodies? Which is weird, because we're teaching people materialism, right? And yet, they're believing that they are this disembodied thing. This is again, another example of the kind of metaphysical schizophrenia that happens when people don't have a proper anthropology. Because the reality is, if you are fully spiritual and fully material, that's just what you actually are, then you're experiencing it directly.

And so, any kind of ideology that denies that, you're not ultimately going to be able to be consistent with that ideology. And so, you're going to have these kinds of weird, I call it metaphysical schizophrenia. And that's what's happening here. And so, you're getting materialism in your biology class. But then you're getting weird, Gnostic, gender ideology everywhere else, you're kind of confused.

FRANK:

Yeah, you'd be completely confused. There's no limit to the contradictions of leftist ideology. It just, it amazes me that people are actually sucked into it. But I think what you said earlier is really the key to this, that our compassion is weaponized against us. Because all these things are given to us or advertised to us. Satan comes as an angel of light, as good things. This is about love. This is about equality. This is about equity. It's about justice. This is about right.

JAY:

That's right.

FRANK:

And we're about that kind of stuff.

JAY:

We're all about it, absolutely. It's always going to come to us. We always imagine evil after the fact, right? And so, we're Nazis now, right? Because we're not Nazis, and we're not being pressurized. But that's not ever how it is when you're on the inside, right? From the inside, it's something that appeals to what you think is good, and true, and beautiful. And so, it's always going to be that. And that's the thing that we're not prepared for. It's like, well, I'll know when the Nazis come because they have the swastika. That's not how this is going to be. It's going to be framed in terms of, do you love people, or do you hate people? And the love is going to be the thing they want you to do. And the hate is going to be thing you should do. You know?

FRANK:

As we've said before, love does not require approval. In fact, many times you have to stand in the way of evil to love people. You don't just approve of what anyone wants to do. Every parent knows that. Last thing, Jay. Is there any resource for teenagers on this that you know of that

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could guide them in the right direction? I know Nancy Pearcey's book is good, but it might be a little heady. Is there?

JAY:

There is. And so, there's a couple of books by Erin Brewer. If you Google her name at Amazon, written specifically for kids, because she herself is a [unintelligible]. She's an adult, she's a Gen-Xer. But she experienced this herself, that sort of describes this in a really strong kind of compassionate way. But there haven't been that many things written for kids yet. The other side's been busy writing. They've been doing it.

FRANK:

'Heather Has Two Mommies', all the way back from 20-30 years ago.

JAY:

Yeah. So, we're just now kind of catching up, honestly. And so, that's the one resource that I'm thinking of just off the top of my head. If say, Nancy's book 'Love Thy Body,' which is kind of a more intellectual treatment for a high school or college age.

FRANK:

All right, good. Well, friends, it's always great having Dr. Jay Richards on the program. In addition to what we've talked about here, you want to avail yourself of his other books like 'Money, Greed, and God', 'Invincible,' and infiltration.

JAY:

'Infiltrated.' Yeah.

FRANK:

Oh, 'Infiltrated.' That's it, 'Infiltrated.' And there was oh, 'The Price of Panic.'

JAY:

Yes. In fact, I'm going to talk about that here at the SES conference this afternoon. 'The Tyranny of Experts,' which in that case, had to do with the COVID lock down madness.

FRANK:

Yeah, and that might be coming again, as we get closer to an election. They are going to want to have another pandemic so people can vote as many times as they want to with these mail-in ballots. [Laughter]

JAY:

Here we go again. Yeah.

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FRANK:

It's coming again. All right, friends. Okay, if you're just listening to this, just a couple of days before the 26th. Remember, I'll be at Auburn University on the 26th. And then the following week at the University of Cincinnati on November 2nd. And then we'll be with the Unshaken conference in Nashville. I believe that's November 4th. And we'll see you here next week, Lord willing. God bless.

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