



Boys in Dresses?

“There’s a little boy in my child care home who loves to wear dresses as he plays. Last week he was wearing a pink dress and red heels when his father came to pick him up. The father seemed upset to see his son wearing girls’ clothes. Is it okay for a boy to play in a dress?”

— *Concerned caregiver*

Young children are learning about the world around them. Pretend play is one way that children learn about people and things they see all the time. Boys see their mothers, sisters, and other women wearing dresses. It’s normal for boys to want to try wearing a dress to see what it’s like. You may see girls doing the same thing by wearing a man’s jacket or necktie.

Some children like to wear dress-up clothes every day. The rustle of walking in a skirt, the colors in a necktie, the challenge of walking in heels, or the snug feel of a tutu make it fun for a child who likes to try new things.

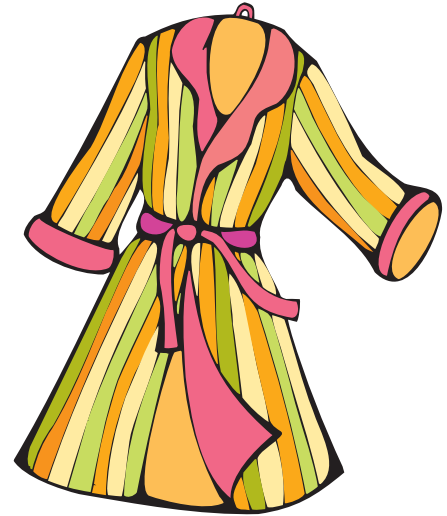
Just like clothes, children will want to try the same activities they see adults doing. It doesn’t make any

It’s normal for young boys to wear dresses as they play.

difference to a child if the activity is usually done by a male or female. Children learn more about everyday activities by pretending to cook, hold and feed babies, wash dishes, go to the store, go to work, wash clothes, etc.

No sissies

If you care for a mixed-age group of children, watch to make sure older children don’t make fun of young boys who like to wear dresses or play with dolls. Remind them that many great dads care for babies. Older children may want to become part of the play, but think they are “too cool” to play with dolls. Help them think about a way they can join the play, such as being an aunt or uncle, or they may like to make a snack and serve it as part of the pretend play.



Normal play

Some adults, especially fathers, fear their sons may grow up to be homosexuals if they wear dresses or play “girl” games. Research shows that boys who play with dolls or wear dresses are no more likely to become homosexual men than any other boys. There is no final research that tells what makes a person prefer one sex over another.

Think of this as children learning about their world through play. Tell nervous parents that this pretend play is a normal way for children to explore the world. They want to learn about and try doing the same things as the adults around them.

Children learn about the world through pretend play.



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