



Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience

Matt Kailey

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience

Matt Kailey

Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience Matt Kailey

Matt Kailey lived as a straight woman for the first forty-two years of his life. Though happy as a social worker and teacher, he knew something wasn't right. Then he made some changes. With the help of a good therapist, chest surgery, and some strong doses of testosterone, Kailey began his journey toward becoming a man.

As his body morphed and his voice dropped, Kailey began noticing subtle shifts in the way he was treated. Men suddenly stopped offering to change flat tires for him but insisted on talking to him about women and bodily functions. Women got nervous when he baby-talked to their infants but routinely asked him to move heavy things around the office. In these everyday exchanges, Kailey recognized the many ways we define what it means to be male. He also realized that, with few role models, he had to learn to accept himself as a person between two genders.

As he writes about his transition from female to male, Kailey answers all the questions you've ever had about what it's like to live as a transsexual. From the fear of public restrooms to deciding whether to "pack" his pants, Kailey explains what the world looks like from his new vantage point—a position more people are discovering as gender transitions become increasingly common.

More than a memoir, *Just Add Hormones* is full of sound advice for those who may be questioning their gender. And through his story, Kailey offers valuable insights to the families and friends of those who have started a transition.

Funny, fresh, and incredibly candid, *Just Add Hormones* can help us all consider—and even laugh at—our own notions of what it means to be a man or a woman.

Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience Details

Date : Published June 15th 2005 by Beacon Press

ISBN : 9780807079584

Author : Matt Kailey

Format : Hardcover 171 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Gender, Lgbt, Transgender, Glibt, Queer, Autobiography, Memoir

 [Download Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Trans ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Tra ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience Matt Kailey

From Reader Review Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience for online ebook

Courtney says

Incredibly shallow and simplified account of the trans experience. Kailey's half-defensive, half-preachy tone accented by trite, unfunny similes did little to enlighten the reader as to the motivations and internal struggle felt by the trans community. Perhaps this would be helpful for someone who knows absolutely nothing about queer or trans culture. But even then, I would hesitate to recommend this remarkably incomplete monologue.

Cole Jack says

I respect Matt Kailey and his position as both an educator and trans role model. That said, this book is not his best work. It is worth reading his blog, Tranifesto, and his other books, particularly Teeny Weenies, to see how his positions on trans issues evolve with time. This is an early text for him and it reads that way. Some aspects of it, particularly his defensive assertion that trans men do not have male privilege and, even further, that there really isn't male privilege to be had shows a lack of understanding about the meaning of "privilege."

Overall, the text covers a lot of ground both in the information it provides about Matt's life and trans identities. Unfortunately, by attempting to cover such a broad range of topics in limited space they get only the briefest coverage and often come across as incomplete.

JM says

Society has a seething obsession for everything that breeds limits: categories, labels, definitions, norms. Intangible stoppers. Imagined walls. From a practical point of view, these limits are necessary to maintain order. The problem, however, lies in society's inclination for confinement. We tend to put too much faith in givens that, when alternatives and other possibilities turn up, we either crouch back in irrational fear or launch headfirst in irrational hostility. This overblown faith in givens is manifested in heteronormativity-- in the binary gender system, in strict and razor-sharp definitions of masculinity, femininity, and now, even of homo, bi and trans-sexuality.

Matt Kailey's Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience challenges society's predisposition towards restrictions and restrictiveness. In less than two hundred pages, Kailey gives an extensive and occasionally hilarious walkthrough of his experiences, plights, and views as a gay transsexual. A tricky part of discussing LGBTQ experiences and issues, especially in first person, is that one might get too self-absorbed and end up passing what's personal off as the general--thereby hurting (instead of upholding) diversity, a byword of LGBTQ movements. Kailey dodges this trap by being clear about what is and what is not his. And that's not without being relatable. His insistence on similarities amid differences, for one, makes the book speak even to non-transpeople.

What I find most laudable about Just Add Hormones is what I also consider to be the best evidence of its being relatable: its use of simple language. Throughout the book, Kailey stresses the importance of educational dialogue in making our world a more livable place for transpeople (and the rest of non-

heterosexuals, for that matter). Not only does light and unassuming language get the book's substance right across, it also creates the impression that, contrary to popular belief, transpeople's lives can be grasped and understood just as possibly as other lives out there.

The order in which the book's points were organized and presented simulates a transsexual's journey from the cumbersome, hormone-driven adjustment phases to the rather transcendence/cause-oriented post transition. The first parts open one's eyes to realities that transpeople have to face every day: DSM's pathologization of transsexuality (through the manual's listing down of the category as Gender Identity Disorder or GID), the difficulties of self-identification and social interaction for those who are passing by the so-called Gray Zone, and the ups and downs of taking hormones. There are at least a couple of things to learn from these discussions. First, that transition is more complex and delicate than it is generally understood. One of the hardest parts of transitioning, I realize, is going through adolescence again at the time of adult responsibilities and steeper expectations. I can only wonder how this part can be worsened by gender discrimination and oppression. Another thing to keep in mind is that changes do not happen overnight. Physical and physiological changes (i.e. the effect of injected hormones) take several days. And that's not even accounting for the emotional and psychological adjustments that go with the changes, which are also changes in themselves.

But transsexual experiences, I believe, comprise only a portion of Just Add Hormones. Way beyond being "An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience", the book can be anybody's guide to understanding the ways by which society and certain social constructs operate, as well as to coming to terms with the incongruence of sexual orientation and gender identity. Kailey's discussions of society's puffed up fascination with female breasts and male phallus actually had me rationalizing such fascination to myself. Part of the reason, I believe, has to do with the hype and attention that the media afford the mentioned body parts (through the "ideal bodies" that the said sector disseminates and glorifies). As a media scholar (and occasional practitioner), I can attest to the media industry's unapologetic nonchalance towards its manufacturing of reductive and alienating ideals. Regrettably, though, media representation issues are shrugged off (in passive acceptance, that is) within the industry just as much as they are lambasted in the academe. It is also important to note that, most of the time, tinkering with representations lies beyond the power of an ordinary media practitioner. Somehow, Kailey was right in pointing a finger to media's being driven by advertising revenues. No matter how badly certain media practitioners want to cater to the underrepresented (instead of settling with cut-and-dried images or stereotypes), program sponsors are people who are trained not to gamble; in wooing and buying audiences, they'd rather stick with traditional, "tried-and-tested" (but actually dated) methods. Most of them fail to see audiences as critical and dynamic.

Still in regard to the book's discussion of society: I appreciate how Kailey doesn't wash his hands clean of qualified subscription or falling victim to the social ideals and norms that he criticizes. By not being self-righteous, he puts into light another unpopular reality: that discrimination and hatred exist even within homo, bi, and trans communities. Akin to this recognition of complexity is his underscoring of diversity and intersectionality-- of LGBTQ's varied interests and affiliations, and his acknowledgement of gender's being only one of the possibly incalculable identities out there.

Beyond the realm of the personal, Just Add Hormones' theoretical strength lies in its presentation of the divide between sexual orientation and gender identity. I believe that anyone who reads the book will eventually get on to asking: why, in the first place, is there a need to reconcile the two? Kailey's being both gay and trans contributed the most to the effectiveness of the book's exposition of the SO-GI incongruence. At the risk of seeming naive, I find Kailey's self-label--"gay transman"--peculiar. This is the first time that I have come across someone who chose to transition without being formerly attracted to the opposite sex. The common notion is that transpeople embark on transitioning to fend off the guilt that same-sex intercourse brings about-- a notion that assumes all transpeople to be hapless slaves of heteronormativity. Just Add Hormones effectively pounds this notion to smithereens.

One thing that struck me was the fact that Kailey chose to transition with the knowledge that, by doing so, he would affirm DSM's diagnosis of him. It must be awfully tricky, believing that there's nothing wrong about you but still choosing to undergo something that is professionally considered a "cure", all because it's the only way you could become yourself. It's like pleading not guilty of a crime but still choosing to go to prison. I believe in free will and in having multiple options, but with society's obsession with "providing diagnoses", I guess we really don't have much to choose from, after all. Or better still, I guess everything is really just a matter of perspective.

Despite Kailey's identity (which struck me as peculiar) and views (which lean towards changing society, doing away with heteronormativity, and the like), I do not see him on the extreme end of radicalism, towards which, I would like to think, my views regarding sex and gender are bent. He believes in a "core personality", in "similar issues, wants, desires, and dreams". The way I see it, Kailey stands somewhere between assimilationism and queer, on what I used to regard as a rather "safe" position. But to map out and to sling crap at the stance in question are to miss the point. If there's one thing that the book makes known, it's that we really don't need clear-cut categories and definite answers, if having them meant closing the doors of our understanding. We needn't confine ourselves within givens, if doing so meant unreasonably negating unpopular labels, and if doing so meant categorically denying the existence of still-unborn possibilities.

Julian Pecenco says

A reasonable book, with some interesting observations, but it didn't really flow very well. I had really hoped for more of a memoir, and it left me wanting to know more of his personal story, particularly given his experience of being so femme as a female. I recognize that for those those new to trans issues, some background might be needed, but it really felt much more like yet another Trans 101, rather than an engaging memoir. (I'm currently in the midst of listening to Chaz Bono's new book, Transition, which I am finding much more satisfying.)

Elizabeth says

Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience by Matt Kailey

ILL from the library

<http://tranifesto.com/category/just-a...>

TOC

INTRODUCTION ARE YOU DONE?

PART ONE TRANS MINDS

We're Everywhere

Textbook Transsexuals

PART TWO TRANS IDENTITY

What's in a Name?

The Secret Men's Club

PART THREE TRANS BODIES

Hormones, Glorious Hormones
Flat Busted
Dickless in Denver
The Body Public
A Hypocritical Oath

PART FOUR TRANS SEXUALITY

Sexual Transsexuals
You Say GLB, I Say GLBT
What Does That Make Me?

PART FIVE TRANS PRIDE

A Matter of Choice
Changing the Patterns

PART SIX POST TRANS

A Man in This World
I Do. Can You?
What Now?
A Trans-Friendly World

AFTERWORD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TRANS-LATIONS

RESOURCES

Arna says

2.5-3 stars for me. I purchased this book as I currently have a family member undergoing female-to-male transition, and I was interested to read about the experience from the point of view of someone who has "been there and done that". While there were a number of interesting points made, and it was a good summary of one person's experiences, I didn't feel like I had any additional insights into the process or experience, so the title possibly slightly oversold the premise.

Adrienne says

What would you think of a newly out book titled "Just Add Hormones" with a cover design featuring two huge test tubes, the sort you expect to see on a biochemistry manual? "Clinical, too clinical!" is what I thought, "more than probably sterile of humor and devoid of linguistic merit". I have been misled. I noted the title at the bottom of my gender-studies-to-read list, and it wasn't until after I had pretty much read everything else available in the field, that I eventually did pick a copy of the book. And I couldn't put it down! I was hooked to its delightful, fascinating, full of laugh-out-loud humor and verbal wit, story.

Is it really so difficult to be a man, a transman in particular? Having just read the personal account of someone who has lived in both the realms of women and (trans)men, I would probably reconsider, if I were

to transition. Or at least think twice.

Karen says

I've had great admiration for author Matt Kailey ever since stumbling onto his incredibly informative blog, Tranifesto. He is a gay transman who transitioned from female to male (FTM) in his early 40s and is a thoughtful, pragmatic, and passionate writer. Although he incorporates some autobiographical material into this book, it's more a collection of chapters on different aspects of the transsexual experience: mind, identity, body, sexuality, and the changes he hopes will come about in society as a whole. He says, "*The most beautiful thing about being a transsexual person is being able to experience the world in two genders.... There's a world out there that could mightily benefit from what we have to offer, and that in and of itself might be the reason that we exist.*"

He admits that a transman (due to the strong influence of testosterone) can generally assimilate more easily into the larger culture than many transwomen (MTF) can. But assimilation--although tempting for personal reasons--doesn't change society for the better. Through this book and via his consulting work, Kailey works to educate others into a greater understanding and acceptance of trans, gay, lesbian, and bisexual civil rights.

For anyone interested in autobiographical information beyond the scope of this book, I'd recommend Kailey's volume of personal essays written after *Just Add Hormones*, *Teeny Weenies: And Other Short Subjects*.

A says

In terms of helping a general audience understand transsexualism, what transition involves, why people need it, and the particular issues trans people as a community face, this is a pretty good book. Kailey also seems to be aiming to educate trans people curious about transition and understanding the difficulties they will face throughout the process and after, and I think he achieves these aims as well. His style is straightforward, with a conversational, occasionally light tone that makes for a quick, easy read. Those expecting a deeper memoir on Kailey's childhood, life pre-transition, and what compelled him to transition will likely be disappointed. Personally, as I didn't see this as the book's aim, didn't bug me as much.

I do feel with other readers who were put off by Kailey's dismissal of "male privilege" a couple times near the beginning. It put me off too, but as I read further into the book, it's pretty clear he thinks women are more deeply harmed by sexism, via scrutiny over their bodies and the fear they feel because of men's actions. It's possible that he sees (or saw, since he recently passed away) his out trans status as effectively canceling out aspects of any male privilege he might be afford. Or he really just doesn't see it. But I would not say there is any antagonism toward feminism in general.

He also covers the real difficulties trans people face, how they are adversely affected by marriage laws, how they are often stigmatized and targets for violence. He deals with his own difficulties finding romance after his transition and fitting into the gay world as a trans man. There is an attitude of acceptance throughout, but great honesty in conveying the real struggles he and others far worse off must go through.

Really, my only major criticism is the book is structured more as a collection of short essays and is thus rather spotty, even though it is organized in related sections. This is pretty minor, though, compared to the

overall value of the content.

Gataki says

Very informative, helped learning on the subject, brought up issues I had never even thought of.

Anna says

How arrived: library

Why I picked it up: good title, interest in subject matter

Expectations: anticipated, but only middling expectations

Stars: four

I have to say this was a really interesting book. I would probably recommend it to a book club or something??it creates a lot of great conversations.

In a nutshell, this is a book about transsexuals in America, as written by a female-to-male transsexual. Kailey talks about the process, what it??s like for the individual, what it??s like for the outsider, and what all of this means to society today. I picked Just Add Hormones up because I??ve always been pretty interested in this stuff. My college was full of uber-hippies who smoked pot, didn??t eat animals, and identified as gender-queer. No, that didn??t describe every person there, but a vast majority would have fit into at least one category. New College of Florida, you were the best, but man were we weird. Anyway, I knew three people who were working through gender issues. Two actually made the transition, surgeries etc, while my dance instructor was only beginning when we graduated.

Transsexuality is a difficult thing. I recently discovered the prefix ??cis??, which on Wikipedia is defined as "individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity", as in cisgendered. Talking about this is disconcerting, because if you are cis, you??ve never really considered being another gender. What makes you decide to be another gender? Kailey talks about his mental state only briefly, and I came away with the idea that it is rude to ask. He covers a lot of ??manners?? issues, a lot of them probably created by ignorance and possibly shock. Fyi, never ask a transgendered person about ??the surgery??. You??d never ask a stranger about their genitals, would you?

I think the best part of this book was that it really focused on making transsexuality not that big a deal. Yes, it got a little repetitive, but Kailey was just trying to drive his point home: transsexuals are actually just people. Some will always straddle the gender issue (ew, pardon the??pun?) but many will try to live as ??normal?? a life as they can??transition and get on with it. Those who choose to come forward as trans to educate other people help create awareness, which makes things easier for everyone.

Kailey brought forward a few interesting issues. My favorite was his description of how his life changed as a man??he could walk down streets at night but he couldn??t coo at babies, for example. One chapter was devoted to the importance of a physical penis. He also mentioned that the transgender community is having trouble getting accepted by the gay community, in some instances! Apparently LGBT wasn??t so much for the T in 2005, when this book was written. They thought the transcommunity would bring down the tone and bring up the crazy, which seems so hypocritical. Just another opportunity to think about how truly other transsexuality is in some ways, even while you are accepting that it is not that other after all.

