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## It Takes a Gender Creative Parent

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"Mr. and Mrs. Little often discussed Stuart quietly between themselves when he wasn't around, for they had never quite recovered from the shock and surprise of having a mouse in the family" (White, 1945, p. 9). In Stuart's infancy, his doctor "was delighted with Stuart and said that it was very unusual for an American family to have a mouse" (p. 3). It was, however, not always so delightful for Stuart's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Little. Mr. Little banned references to mice in their conversations and ordered Stuart's mother to tear out the nursery rhyme page where "Three Blind Mice" appeared, saying, "I should feel badly to have my son grow up fearing that a farmer's wife was going to cut off his tail with a carving knife" (p. 9).

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Many of us remember hearing the classic story of *Stuart Little* when we were children, or recall reading it to our own children. I am sure that when E. B. White wrote this archetypical tale for a mid-twentieth-century readership, he had no idea that it would someday serve as the perfect parable of the twenty-first-century true story of the parents who find out they have a gender expansive or transgender child. Unlike the Littles, who knew from the beginning that their child was different, millennium parents may not know until years later. But when families uncover that the child's gender is not the one matching the sex marker inscribed on their birth certificate, or that the child is not complying with the gender norms of their culture, it can be no less shocking than discovering your child is a mouse. Like Mr. Little, they may fear for their child's safety, not at the hand of a farmer's wife, but in the grip of an unaccepting, hostile world. Some parents and family members will learn to take it in stride, as the Littles did; others come ready to embrace their child no matter what their gender identity or expression; still others will struggle to recover from the assault on their sensibilities; and the rest, sadly, never recover.

For the mental health professional, the task will always be the same: joining with the family to facilitate creativity in raising what I have dubbed a *gender creative child*, one who does not abide by the binary gender norms, prescriptions,

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