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Transition in Four Voices

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When coming out as trans, AJ asked that we use the pronouns he, him, and his, as they identified as a boy. After three years, AJ realized they were nonbinary and so we now use they, them, and their, even when discussing their early life. While AJ genuinely identified as a man for a few years, part of their process as a trans person has resulted in identifying more with "butch" as it aligns to womanhood, although AJ does not now identify as a woman. This is all to say that what follows describes our experiences and thoughts on AJ's initial coming out as a trans man.

Barbara Rio-Glick (a.k.a. River)

As a lesbian feminist, I thought I had hit the jackpot when my doctor told me that my twins were both girls. It's not that I hate men. It just seemed that, as a lesbian who had never even had a brother, it would be so much easier to raise girls. My job would be to help them grow into strong, confident women who would care for the world and all its creatures. As a mother of boys, however, my job would have been to teach them to recognize the privilege they are afforded in our society and then to use it only for good. The thought of somehow making this appealing, despite all the cultural dictates regarding what it means to be male, seemed like a huge task. So, believing myself to be the mother of two girls, I set about raising powerful girls and thought I was being fairly successful. But when, almost 16 years later, one of my "girls" told me they were a boy, I felt like my world had shattered. All sorts of illogical reasons why it couldn't be true immediately filled my mind. You know how your mind plays tricks on you when something seems too big to be real? When AJ told me they were a boy, I remember thinking: "That's impossible. They are an identical twin," and "They're too short to be a boy." Never mind that none of that made sense. It brought me comfort at the time.

Mostly I was overcome by a colossal sense of grief that I could at first only verbalize as "losing my little girl." I was filled with sadness, with fear, with worry. My mind was full of disturbing thoughts: "Will my child be killed by some hate-filled, transphobic idiot?" "Will someone love my child, or will it be a sad, lonely