

Before I Had the Words: On Being a Transgender Young Adult

Skylar Kergil

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Skylar Kergil was born female, but he identified with males before he could even understand what that meant. As he grew, he became increasingly uncomfortable living as a girl, and as a young teenager began exploring his sexuality and questioning his gender identity. *Before I Had the Words* is his honest, thoughtfully told memoir.

As Skylar's story starts, he is living in California as a little girl. A very active child, Skylar was involved in sports and wanted to be just like his older brother. At a young age, he dealt with challenges including a move east, his parents' divorce, his mother's cancer diagnosis, and his brother's substance abuse issues.

Middle school and puberty were the next challenges, followed by high school, romantic relationships, and a growing understanding that living as a boy was a more comfortable natural fit. Throughout his story, Skylar faces each challenge with grace.

Though he writes primarily about the resources he discovered and the support he received, the fact that the book offers so much hope after a clearly difficult childhood is truly remarkable. Skylar's story will be incredibly helpful to young people who may be struggling to understand their own gender or sexual identities, and who may feel very alone.

Skylar's story will also benefit anyone who is curious about what it means to be transgender. Written with openness and honesty that conveys much about Skylar's struggles, the book does a wonderful job of demystifying identity and normalizing differences. It is a beautiful book.

CATHERINE THURESON (September/October 2017)

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