

Does your little boy sometimes dress-up in girls clothing during pretend play? If so, take some advice from family psychologist John Rosemond as he addressed the following question from a concerned parent.

Question: We've always made all manner of toys available to our twin 3-year-olds, a boy and a girl; nevertheless, our son tends to play with trucks and toy soldiers, while our daughter plays with dolls. Over the last few months, they have begun to enjoy playing dress-up, which we have encouraged. The problem, if it's a problem, is that they always dress up in female clothes----both of them. Now we're thinking we've let this go on too long. The other day, they appeared before us, both dressed like girls, and our son proudly announced, "We're girls." Uh-oh! Where do we go from here?

Answer: I would suggest you go to your libation locker, pour your favorite spirit, and calm down. How marvelous, actually! What wonderful imaginations! And what a blessing to you that they are able to occupy themselves so creatively and harmlessly! Consider the alternative! Nothing in a young child's world is more fun than playing dress-up. *Typically, play of this sort emerges late in the third year of life or early in the fourth. Before this, the child's curiosity-driven explorations have been limited to material

During this first exploratory phase, the child develops a reputation for "getting into everything." Evidence is rapidly accumulating to the effect that the child's brain development profits greatly from having a good amount of freedom in this area----when, in other words, his explorations are not overly hindered or punished.

Imagination begins to flower in late toddlerhood; at the point the typical child's play expands to encompass the exploration of roles and relationships.

Formerly, the child played only "with" things. Now, he begins playing "at" things. Oh, the miracle of it all! Please understand that a 3-year-old has no internal censor where such things are concerned, no inner voice telling him that while it's all right to dress up as a clown, it's not all right to dress up as the opposite sex. Those inner voices don't start talking for a few years, in fact, and when they do, some of what they say is completely unnecessary.

Now, while it's a bit strange and certainly inappropriate in most social circles for a 30-year-old man to dress in women's clothing, there is nothing strange or inappropriate about a 3-year-old boy doing so. It's as harmless as dressing up like a clown. If your son enjoyed dressing in a clown outfit and one day announced that he was a clown, you wouldn't worry that he was going to want to wear nothing but clown suits when he was 12, would you? And even if your son develops a lifelong predilection for dressing in women's clothing, it may interest you to know that most cross-dressing males are heterosexual.



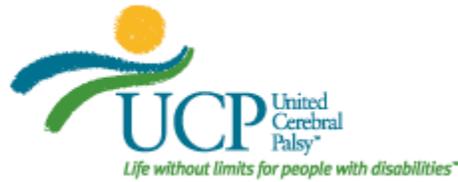
Information obtained from: www.nctimes.com
Family psychologist John Rosemond answers parents' questions on his web site at www.rosemond.com

The bottom line:

This is nothing to worry about. Announcing that he is a girl is no more significant than our daughter Amy announcing at age 3 that she was Jennifer. Within a year, Amy was again telling people her name was Amy, and within a reasonably short time your son will let go of the "I'm a girl" thing. In the meantime, relax and go with the most enjoyable, precious flow of all this.

*If it bugs you, and you just can't stop being bugged by it, then tell the kids they can play dress-up in their room only. Then, please, leave 'em alone.

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Living with Children: Dress-up fantasy is just that



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