

It's Tits: A Short Top Surgery Coloring Zine

To my mom who never left my side and Dean for having good timing

I. Summer is a time of transitions. In the summer of 2017, I came out as trans, and two years later in the summer of 2019, I finally got the top surgery appointment I'd been hoping for. Top surgery refers to the process of surgically altering one's chest to better align with their gender identity. For me, that meant removing my breasts that I had been binding (compressing) for years. Even now, finding a photo reference of myself in a binder to draw from is rare. I wish I had been able to be more positive about my body—to take photos in my binder and know that there is no ideal trans body to be striving for.

II. The week of my surgery my sister and I threw a bye-bye boobies party where I filled her apartment with people to celebrate the soon approaching date. I am not usually a party person, but it felt good to express joy rather than shame of not fitting into a typically cis (one's assigned sex at birth matches one's gender identity) narrative. We had fun competing to see who could come up with the most names for boobs and playing pin the nipples on the boobs. Obviously, there were also moments I did not feel like celebrating leading up to my surgery, and this process looks different for everyone.

III. The night before my appointment I hung out with a friend who had top surgery a few years ago. Before I left, I grabbed a bunch of button-ups from him because after surgery you are not supposed to lift your arms up above your head to avoid damage to the healing scars. The morning of, I put on a tropical print blue button-up I'd inherited the night before that smelled of my friend. I checked in to the hospital and found myself introduced to a whole crew of people who would be a part of my surgery team. Next thing I knew I was up, with my sister and mom beside me to laugh at my post-anesthesia goofiness and get me home safe.

IV. The days following surgery were not the most pleasant for someone as squeamish as me. I don't do well with any sort of gore in movies so finding myself with two drains connected to my scars was not my favorite. Post-surgery I found myself back in a binder to reduce swelling and keep me wrapped tightly, which was a mix of comforting and constraining. The healing process felt long when I was in it as my nipples look like pepperoni or I grew tired of sleeping straight up in a recliner. What makes a huge difference though is having people to help carry the load.

V. Fall began soon and I found myself trying on all my sweaters to see what they looked like now with a flat chest. Top surgery did not cure my dysphoria by any means. I was even surprised that I felt a larger sense of dysphoria immediately after surgery. Thinking back on this now it makes sense that my body looked different than it ever had before so of course it took me time to

adjust, even though it was something I wanted. Dysphoria does not just disappear, but for me, top surgery did bring comfort to some of the ways I feel dysphoric about my body.

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