A British couple is raising its baby to be gender-neutral

Joanna Whitehead

A couple are raising their toddler without telling it what sex it is, in a bid to "mitigate the gender bias that society places on children".

After taking the decision to bring up Anoush as gender-neutral, Jake England-Johns and Hobbit Humphrey refer to their 17-month-old as “they”, rather than “him” or “her”.

Close family members have not been told the child’s sex and grandmother Camille only found out when she changed a nappy. England-Johns, 35, and Humphrey, 38, also dress the toddler in gender neutral clothing. The married couple, who are members of the climate action group, Extinction Rebellion, said they intend to let Anoush choose their own gender identity when they are old enough, because they wish for them to “grow into their own person”. England-Johns told the BBC’s Inside Out: “The neutral in gender neutral refers to us trying to behave neutrally towards our child rather than trying to make them neutral”.

The pair discussed the ways in which they could challenge the gender bias after discovering Humphrey was pregnant. “Eventually, we decided we wouldn’t tell people whether they were a boy or a girl... in order to create this little bubble for our baby to be who they are.”

However, the pair admitted that responses to their decision have been mixed. “I don’t think people really took us seriously initially because what you say you’re going to do when you’re pregnant can often be very different later when you are faced with bringing up a crying, screaming baby,” England-Johns said.

However, the pair insisted important discussions had arisen as a result of their decision and described their experience as “a really beautiful thing”. “It has had the effect we wanted, of letting our baby develop its own interests regardless of gender,” England-Johns said. “So, while they love having a doll’s tea party, they also are fascinated by motorbikes and machinery.” THE INDEPENDENT
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