

A Transsexual Wonder Woman Finally Beginning Life

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I never thought that I would grow old, as a young boy, I was going to be Superman forever. Now, I'm Wonder Woman. I do dress up in a Wonder Woman costume on Halloween,



complete with real boots, a real metal tiara, real metal wrist cuffs with a red star, and a golden lasso of truth. The truth is I found out that I am not going to stay young forever. When I found myself turning 60, I cried for a couple of days over it, but I'm blaming that on the estrogen. Estrogen is a potent female hormone that I have been taking for several years now and will continue to do so for the rest of my life.

I can remember when I was 6 years old, listening to my grandfather talk to friends and relatives about health problems due to age. "Can't they talk about anything else?" I thought. "I'll not complain or feel all those pains when I get old." Ah the little knowledge we have in youth. Now, I'm feeling those pains, now I understand. But I am happier that I have been my entire life!

There are however, some things we DO know as children the things that are born into us and are a part of us. In our minds we may know something that is not possible for us to put into words because we just do not have the experience, knowledge, or vocabulary to express what we know to be deeply true about ourselves.

It took a long time for me to know – really know what was inside me. Now one of the purposes in my life is to educate others about people like me. What surprises me every time is someone else saying "You're just a normal person!"

The physical side of life is only one side. I believe the mental side of life is just as important if not much more important!

I could not stand looking forward toward to the future which I am so excited about if I were not happy and did not have hopes, dreams, plans, and a purpose in life. I am excited about the future! I am excited about the things I want to do, the things I plan to do, the people I want to help and those wonderful people that will come into my life that I have never heard of yet. Things are finally "coming together" for me.

I am not saying my life is lacking problems, far from it. After a lifetime of being depressed and not knowing where I was going, ***I finally made the decisions that allowed me to be happy.*** Of course all my decisions have not led me to happiness. Sometimes the decision is a two edged sword. It brings happiness and it brings

pain. For any transsexual the decision to transition can be very difficult to make.

Many people can not understand or will not allow themselves to understand the decisions I have made. It is the people that will not allow their minds to be open to allow themselves permission to understand that I worry about. My decisions are beyond any concept of reality that a lot of people have. These decisions are completely incomprehensible to some.

Part of my purpose now is to lecture and educate to inform people about others like me and what it means to us to be who we are and to be happy in our lives.

I am a Post Op Transsexual woman. What does that mean? Simply, I was born a genetic male and, after Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS), I am now a woman. I am a complete woman in ALL respects. This is not your normal course for someone who is approaching retirement age! I have a friend who just transitioned and she is 74 years old! She is so beautiful and happy! We are both so amazed that OB/GYN physicians can not tell that we were not genetic women unless we tell them. Everyone is amazed at this. To us it just seems right and normal – the place we always wanted to be all our lives.

When I was younger I envisioned my life somewhat like a Thomas Kinkade painting. I saw myself living in a warm, happy, cozy cottage with a loving wife, and the family dog at my knee. My life is far from that now and I am so glad for it! I see that painting as a modified painting now

because of the changes that have happened to me. I would like and expect to have a loving partner in the future to be part of this modified painting. Everyone wants comfort and security. That is so natural and right. There is nothing wrong with that. But I have found comfort in being extremely satisfied as to who I am and what I am doing.

The terms in the arena of “gender” can be so confusing. Many people do not know what a transgendered person is and confuse someone who is transgendered with a person who is transsexual. They are different!

I’ll give some easy definitions. The word transgender is a broad term that can be used to describe many aspects of human gender identity and people who range from cross dressers to those who want to have a “sex change”. This spectrum of transgendered people is wide and just like the spectrum of the people in the general public ranges from those who are normal, rational, and well integrated people to those people who are not so well integrated. Gender identity is something you feel on the inside. It is not the physical sex of your body, gender and sex are different!

A Transsexual is a person (either a genetic male OR a genetic female) who feels their true personal identity is different from the biological body they were born with. For example, a transsexual genetic female knows that her gender identity is really male and a transsexual genetic male knows that his gender identity is really female.

People who are transsexuals like me are usually depressed and suffer

“Dysphoria” all their lives. It is an all pervasive feeling of not being “right” or content with who you are in your own body. Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is thought to be caused by a hormonal imbalance in the womb. It is NOT the fault of anyone and it is NOT something you wake up with one morning and as a whim and think “I want to change my sex.” It is not the fault of the mother or of the child. Currently there also seems to be some genetic markers that indicate transsexuals.

This Dysphoria and unhappiness is hard to explain. It is mentally painful. It is with you constantly. It is NOT a mental illness. It is far more pervasive than any physical pain. It is there your entire life. With some it starts early. Very young children have recently been documented to say “I’m a girl.” when physically they are a male. (It happens the other way around too, with girls saying that they are boys.)

Children, when feeling this Dysphoria just don’t have the words or the knowledge to know what is wrong. They just know something is wrong. My friend described the Dysphoria as follows:

Suppose that you have a thought of a cute and cuddly stuffed toy of a Panda bear, thinking about this bear in passing is normal. However suppose that you can not get the thought of this little stuffed toy out of your mind. No matter what you do for the rest of the hour, day, week, you can not stop thinking of this Panda bear. It is in your thoughts constantly. You are doing other things, like playing with your kids, talking in a business meeting, enjoying an evening out with someone, however always,

always, there is the thought of the Panda bear. You can not stop thinking about it. If, as you go to sleep tonight, will you think of this Panda Bear? If you do you may know a tiny sliver of what it is like to not get a thought out of your head.

Gender Dysphoria is like this. You can not stop having the thoughts of your gender – the gender you want to be – no matter how hard you try or what you do the thought is with you – it is always with you -- it is constantly with you. Only very rarely when you do not have the thoughts do you realize how much you do think and feel the Dysphoria.

The feeling of Gender Dysphoria is often exacerbated in puberty. Some biological females may want to cut their breasts off and some biological males may want to cut their genitals off. But it may not get that serious. They deny the biological sex they have and want to be the gender they know they are in their minds. The feeling is different and manifests itself differently in each individual. This is the crucial point. For each person it is different although there are common feelings and experiences.

In my case as a male child, I had an EZ-bake oven and really enjoyed it. I loved baking cakes and cookies and giving them to my parents. I was content and happy doing this. It felt good. My father eventually confiscated the toy, destroyed it in front of me by stomping on it, and said it was something that boys did not play with. I did not play with dolls nor did I pretend to be a girl. I did not dress in girl’s clothes but probably would have if I had them accessible. Interestingly, I did have several female and male cousins that lived in another state. We would

make the long trip to see them several times each year and in the summer. They were crowded in their house and stored their off season clothes in an upstairs room in which we played out of the way of parents. They did not have television or any of the things to do that we have today. We made up our own games to play. One of them was “dress-up” in which we would don clothes and hide our faces while one of the cousins would guess who was hidden behind the clothes. I always dressed in the girl’s clothes. They almost always guessed who I was because I was wearing the girl’s clothes.

I did play with the girls down the street. We played with our chemistry sets while their mothers supervised. I baked cookies with them and their mothers in their kitchens and felt content and happy. Worry came back into my life when I had to go home I was expected to be a boy at home and I was not happy doing that.

I do remember my mother, grandmother, and sometimes my great-grandmother in the kitchen of my grandmother’s home giving each other home permanents while my grandfather, father, and uncle were in the living-room. I wanted to be with the women, I did not want to be with the men!

“I enjoyed NOTHING masculine.” I hated sports; I disliked hanging around with other boys. I never “got” the idea of hanging out and slugging each other on the shoulder for toughness to see who could take it. I did not enjoy worms, fishing, hunting, fighting, and working on cars or anything like that. The only thing “masculine” I did like was shooting a

BB gun or rifle. I did enjoy being in the company of girls and their mothers. I did have two other male friends when I was between 9 and 12 years old. I did not enjoy doing everything they did – some male things just did not make sense to me. Some male things I just did not comprehend and thought too childish.

I can remember being awed at the sight of the mother of my male friend when she was getting ready to go out. She was transformed from a friend’s mother into a beautiful woman. Her hair was done up, her dress crisp and very attractive, her nylons smooth and silky and her high heels very nice. Seeing her I did not just simply appreciate her beauty and I was not attracted to her as a woman. ***I realized that I wanted to be her! I wanted to be a woman like that.*** This was the first time those thoughts crystallized into a semi-clear focus. I did not truly understand at the time what this all meant. I only knew she had a powerful impact on me.

I remember later in childhood of reading the stories in the sensationalistic newspapers of “men” that became “women”. I remember hearing of Christine Jorgensen and of Renée Richards. They were discussed in embarrassed hushes and with laughter when they were talked about. Or, they were made the object of crude jokes. I remember looking at stories about them when my parents were out of the house or asleep. I felt very afraid when looking at the stories. I felt I could be caught. I knew I would be severely beaten if I ever told my parents of the true feelings I had about the stories. I remember my heart pounding at reading the stories. Several times I thought my

heart would explode and burst through my chest. It was a cardio workout for me just to look at or read the stories!

I believe my father may have been in organizations that shame me today. I stand against everything he was for. I knew at 3 years old I had more morals, dignity, and sense of right and wrong than he ever did in his entire life. He was a bigot and a racist. He kept lead pipes and baseball bats in the back seat of his car so he could go out Friday nights and beat up people who were not the same as he was. He may have been in the KKK. This was Indianapolis where the KKK was very strong in power.

“I know if he were alive today and were to see my transformation, he would literally kill me in an instant!”

He undoubtedly would be out now on weekends killing and hurting anyone that did not fit his definition of normality or gender expression.

I went to an all male college. Again, I never felt that I fit in there I just did not get the jock behavior. Changing the name on my diploma was cause for some amusement as the men I went to college did NOT go to the school with a Kathleen and now I appear on the class rosters that way. One class officer called me and asked if I made a donation correctly because he did not remember Kathleen in his class.

I spent 2 years in the Army ROTC program, dated, married in my junior year, was graduated, and was almost drafted. I grew up in the time of John Wayne movies where he could take a

bullet then get up and win against all odds. I was in college in the 60s. It was the time of peace demonstrations and the Vietnam War. I was conflicted. I loved and still love my country very very much yet I did feel something was amiss with that war. I did not know what to do. I did NOT actively avoid the draft and was ready to go if my country had asked.

I did have one boy that was my best friend when I was 9 to 12 years old. This was the only male I was really friends with as a boy. We lived in the inner city of Indianapolis. At that time there was a program that the Army had that you could enlist with your friends in the neighborhood and serve with them in the same unit. He enlisted in the Marines. I was proud of him. I would probably have enlisted with him if I had lived in the same neighborhood. I learned when I was to be married and contacted him to be my best man that he had been in Vietnam and as a point man on a patrol had stepped on a land mine. He survived and now wears prosthesis on a leg. I have always felt very guilty about not enlisting with him and not being there to take the hit for him even though I was doing my part for my country by programming cockpit displays for fighter aircraft at the time. I somehow did not feel like a “man” by being wounded in Vietnam. This is the extent to my identification with maleness.

I was married in my junior year of college. It was a desperate and needy marriage on my part. This marriage ended in divorce when my wife had an affair with one of her married college professors. I could not take that. She continued this pattern the rest of her life.

Was my Dysphoria partially to blame for the failure of the marriage? Was it the lack of truly feeling like a “real man”? I don’t think it did at all.

Several years later I re-married. That marriage lasted 23 years. We had three children together. When asked now if I have children I sometimes joke with people and say that “Yes, I have three, and their births were really easy for me even though one child was breech and labor lasted about 12 hours!” All of my children are over 21 now and none of them will speak with me on the telephone.

Our daughter is the eldest and works as a graphic artist. She is married to a man who was in the Army Special Forces when I met him. I could not want a better son in-law. When I was in their house before my announcement of my transition, he showed me his weapons and was quite proud of them. I enjoyed them as well. (I do like to shoot and have shot trap with my sons. Some women do like to shoot just for the fun of it and find it fun to enter into marksman contests against men.) The problem with my daughter and her husband seems to be the Army’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy concerning LGBT people and his desires for his future career. My son in law wants to be in the CIA if he is not already there now. Contact with me would be poison to his career. I just finished watching the movie “*Soldier’s Girl*” about the boyfriend of Calpernia Adams who was in the military and beaten to death for being her boyfriend (Calpernia is a transsexual woman).

My daughter Elizabeth called me one day at work. She asked me to tell her the exact spelling of my name and what my Social Security number was. I did, and then I called her back. I asked what she wanted with that information. She told me she had to get a new ID as she had married the weekend before and needed that information. One of the things that a father dreams of is to walk his daughter down the aisle. I knew after I had made my decision to transition, that doing that would not be possible. However I thought at least I could have sat in the back of the church and watched. I was denied even that.

“I cried at my desk at work for a couple of hours. Even now thinking about it there are tears in my eyes.”

That was the last time we spoke on the phone. She will not answer or return my calls. She has said in a text message that she does not know if she could ever get used to the sight of me now.

Update: Beth.

Beth and I have “friended” each other on Facebook. She still will not speak to me on the phone but will say some short answer to a text on Facebook. I found out (in 2011) that she and her husband were divorced. That is all I know -- and that she is working as a graphics artist and designer in Colorado.

My other children are both boys. Both boys went to community college to start their college education. My eldest son Joseph is a chimney-sweep and is developing a business as a very knowledgeable and talented recording engineer.

Years of non-communication from my son(s) and daughter really hurt. Before I announced my transition he thought at least I was a cross-dresser because in one of our conversations he told me he had been through my closets and knew I had a lot of women's clothes. So, he knew something but he never spoke to me about it. We are still not talking about my transition, but I think that may

*Update: Joseph.
From years of not speaking to me or returning any calls or text messages we are communicating now (2011) and he coming to visit me on errands albeit infrequently. This is really something that he and I turned around. I am so happy that this has happened. But it took work on both of our parts.*

come in time. When I call him I say: "Hi, this is Kathleen."

When I announced my transition to my children, I sent them a letter and an email. With the letter I sent I enclosed a copy of the book *True Selves*. This book explains what I was going through and what a transsexual is. I do not believe any of my children read the book. My son Joseph replied to me that what I was doing was wrong and perverted. That he knew lesbians and he knew homosexuals

and I was not either – what I was doing was just not normal. The other language he used I can not repeat. It was vile. It was obvious he was spitting mad. He was so upset he could hardly write.

My youngest son John had lived with me for over a year and a half when he went to the community college about a half a mile from my condo. Before he moved in I told him that I was a cross-dresser (to ease into telling him that I was a transsexual) and that he would have to accept that. I said that I would not run the 100 yard dash from my living-room to my bedroom any longer when I heard his key in the front door to change my clothes. He seemed to be OK with that. At that time I was working in my job full-time as a male and living evenings and weekends as a female. I had several friends who were cross-dressers and my son worked with them on computers for hours at a time when I was not home. Neither my son nor my friend ever said there was any problem. They all said things went great when they were together. I thought things were going to be OK.

I was wrong. I found out that my sons were embarrassed when they had to go to a doctor or dentist – anyplace they had to show a health professional their insurance cards. The cards had my legal name on them: Kathleen OBrien. When asked what relationship I was to them they for some reason could not say "She's my parent." or, "Please call her, she will explain."

They felt compelled to answer "She's my father." which of course embarrassed them.

The situation came to a critical point with my youngest son when he had a car accident and had to show his card and I had the first of my surgeries to start the transition to being a female. By now he knew I was transsexual. I think that seeing me actually have a surgery really brought it home to my youngest son that I was serious about this and that it was not simply “cross-dressing”. After his accident he avoided looking at me. He would not acknowledge my presence in the house. He turned his back on me. If I saw him in the mall, he would turn around and walk the other way instead of coming close to me physically.

I finally told him that I did not expect him to necessarily approve or even understand and accept what I was doing but that I did expect to be treated like a human being. I said that if he could not do so then perhaps he should look for another place to live. I came home a few days later and found that he did just that. He would not tell me where he was living. Then after he finished community college (I was not invited to the graduation ceremony.) He would not tell me what his future plans were. I just found out recently that he went to a school upstate and has graduated with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and like a lot of college graduates now he is having a tough time finding a new position. I was not asked to attend his graduation from this institution either. I only know about his degree because I told him, with a text message, that I wanted to see him. He replied that he would talk to me after him “got his life straightened out”, which meant to him after he finds a job.

Like some children of transgender parents, my children

are having a tough time adjusting to my transition.

This deeply hurts as a parent as I love my children deeply. When married, my children and my house were by far everything in my life. I can still feel the touch of my daughter’s cheek on mine when she was two weeks old and I was holding her and dancing slowly in front of the fireplace in front of the Christmas tree. If I think about not being able to talk to them, love them, and share their lives as a parent, I have tears rolling down my cheeks in a few seconds.

When children are told about their transitioning parent, they are sometimes shocked, sometimes hostile, and sometimes quite loving and accepting.

Update: John.

After Joe allowed me to friend him on Facebook, John as a listed family member allowed me to friend him as well. He had something to say to me after 3 years of not communicating and wrote me a text that expressed his feelings. He said he was not necessarily upset of what I did with my body or gender, but felt upset that I took a father away from him at a time when he needed one most. I have known that for years and told him I understood his feelings and

The daughter of one of my friends who transitioned said to her “dad” that now she has another Mom to go shopping with.

My mother is in her 80s. She has dementia. When I told my mother she

did not understand at first. I finally had to put it in quite simple language that I needed to become a woman or she would have one of her children to bury. This is the only way she can understand why I did what I did. Later, my mother told me that now she has the daughter she always wanted. The concept of my change has stuck. After a couple years of her knowing she calls me her girl. The regret I have is that I did not have all those mother/daughter moments when growing up.

Some children of transsexuals will say that they had known or suspected the “secret” about their parent for some time and the announcement comes as no surprise to them. Other children are so very supportive and warm and accepting. In most cases the parent that is transitioning usually tells everyone in their family that they are still the same loving person on the inside and that it is just a few simple things on the outside that are changing. But is this really the case? The person that has a family goes through a lifetime of hiding what they are from their family and really are a different person than what they have presented to their family – so in a way, they are not the same person.

Remember that the person that transitions has been going through a lifetime of Dysphoria. A lifetime of knowing something is wrong. They go through a lifetime of depression sometimes. In my case I was on anti-depressants for 15 to 20 years. Sometimes I was taking two different anti-depressants at a time.

As soon as I made the decision to transition, I instantly no longer needed any anti-depressant medication.

It was like the snapping of fingers. Instantly my lifelong Dysphoria disappeared. This happened the moment I made the decision to have Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS). After making the decision, I had a direction in life. I had a goal. I had something to work for. I felt contented, truly contented. Words can not explain this feeling. It is sort of like the warm feeling that you have when a loving parent carries you up to bed from where you have fallen asleep and tucks you in. You experience the love and the comfort of truly being at home.

You feel FINALLY that your life is complete and has meaning. I am still amazed at how happy I became as the result of that decision. All the therapists, psychiatrists, and clinics I have been to say I should have done this 20 or 30 years ago. I agree and wish I had. But if I did, I would not have had a family and the children I do.

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”
(Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken).

This is not to say there have not been any problems. Some of them are those already mentioned.

There have been problems. Some people who transition have many more problems than others. Some transitions are really smooth with supportive friends, family, and employers. Other transitions are ill thought out and ill conceived and taken for entirely wrong reasons. As a Gender Therapist and as one who has been there, I adhere to what was known as the HBGIDA (The Harry Benjamin International Gender

Dysphoria Association's Standards Of Care For Gender Identity Disorders, Sixth Version). These Standards of Care (SOC) specify the “rules” for someone who transitions. They include working for a long time with a therapist and a psychiatrist, hormonal therapy, and a real life experience as the gender you wish to be.

One of the rules of the 6th edition of the SOC is the transitioning person spend at least a year of their life living as the gender they want to be. It is during this time that you, your therapists, and your psychiatrist discover if you can live and work as the gender you present. My therapist once told me that he now completely had counter-transference for me as a woman. He once said that when I first started coming to him I was pretty much just a guy in a dress. Now he can think of me in no other way but as a woman. I asked him what the changes were that he noticed. He said “I don’t really know how to express it. But, I know you are a woman because you have started doing all the little things my wife does that irritate me a lot.” When I first told my psychiatrist that I was a transsexual he was – as he should have been – skeptical. But when I was ready to have the GRS he would give me hugs after each session and say “That is a lovely perfume you are wearing, I really like it. What is it?”

There are some cross-dressers or those transgendered individuals that will blithely go about a “transition” of presenting at work or in public as a female (for MTF transitions) with no clue as to what they are doing. They have not done any research, read any books, looked up anything on the internet, been in serious therapy with a

therapist who knows about gender issues, been in a support group of any kind, and yet say they want to be a female at work. They expect to be accepted as a female and treated as such yet they will never fit in. These are the people you see on the sensational talk shows. They are the people that give real cross-dressers and transsexuals a black eye and inflame the public impression of transgendered people as flakes and not worthy of real consideration. Real cross-dressers and transsexuals are ashamed of them.

Everyone who makes this decision in a logical and rational manner makes this decision in an informed manner. There are those who are not logical and rational and try to make this decision in an emotional way. As a gender therapist, I would absolutely insist that anyone I talk to would make the decision in a logical, rational, informed manner. I would NEVER even suggest that someone who is not integrated and stable even attempt to make such a decision. I had a mother present her daughter to me once and claimed that her daughter was a transsexual and wanted to be a boy and not a girl. This parent was for whatever reason, pushing the child into this classification. The child did not have GID.

This is NOT something you do on the spur of the moment after you wake up one morning. You don’t just wake up and say “I think I’ll change my body to be that of the opposite sex.” It doesn’t work that way. It should not work that way. It must not work that way. It should not be done to wield power over the people you are working with or to make the EEO affairs office at work jump through hoops. It is not

something you announce to your family to stand out and make them give you attention.

What you should be aware of are all the problems that accompany such a decision.

One problem is that of support or the lack of it from your family and friends. When you make this decision, you know that it is possible to lose your family.

It is rare that a spouse will remain married to a transitioning individual.

Divorce is hard enough without the extreme burden of a transitioning spouse thrown in. You know when you make this decision that you may lose your children – both custody of your children and communication with your children. They may stop talking to you. This may not happen at all, it could happen for a while, or it could last forever. The same statement applies to all your family, friends, and co-workers.

In the “early” days of Sexual Reassignment Surgery, some psychiatrists would not allow the surgery unless the person who underwent the surgery would get a divorce, stop forever all communication with their children, quit their job, move to another city, assume a new identity, be able to “pass” completely in public and private, and make up a complete childhood history for their alternate sex.

“You know that in making this decision, you could lose your job.”

You know you could be fired for being Transsexual. Some legislation recently introduced had the “T” part of an LGBT law removed with congress thinking there would not be enough support for the bill if the “T” part of it was included. (LGBT by the way stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered.) So, if you are Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual it would be illegal to fire you for that but if you were Transgendered it would be legal to fire you just for that – no excuses necessary. “You are transgendered – you are fired. Don’t slam the door on the way out.”

I do believe we will have legislation to protect transgendered individuals. Hundreds of LGBT organizations supported the inclusion of the “T” part of the legislation. They lobbied congress to keep the transgendered people in the legislation. They were the organizations that were faithful to the cause of equality. One major LGBT group, HRC, with a lot of power did not support the inclusion of Transgendered people citing that if they could get the “LGB” legislation passed the “T” part could come later and would be easier to get. A lot of Transgendered individuals I know felt abandoned and lied to by this organization that did not have the moral courage to put their acts where their words were. I do believe so much in integrity and honesty. Without integrity and honesty, are you the kind of person you really want to be? I feel that each transsexual, either male to female or female to male, has a duty to the rest of us to present to the public a well integrated individual who is a whole and complete person. We are, weather we like it or not, representatives of the population. If any rights and

understanding is to come for us, we all need to represent the best of ourselves.

Y*ou know when you make this decision that you could suffer harassment for the rest of your life.* You could suffer harassment in the job, in life, from friends, from your family, from your co-workers, from people in church, from anyone. I have suffered harassment just when walking down the street to get to the train! People that do not pass are subject to even more harassment or worse – beatings and murders. I still am harassed almost every day. As I walk down 14th street in New York City, some ignorant comments I’ve heard have been: “Well, if it isn’t Mrs. Doubtfire.” Or “She’s a man.” I sometimes get a lot more looks from strangers than other people do. However that goes away in time. Sometimes on the train I sit on the inside seat of a bench 3 seats wide and no one will sit in the outside seat leaving a space between us. They will sit with other people who have the inside seat. All these things hurt of course, but it is part of the consequences you get of the decision you make.

“You should know that you are putting your life in physical jeopardy.” Over 400 transgender people have been murdered in the last several years because they were Transgendered. In one case when she was discovered to be a transsexual, a woman was beaten in the head with a sledge-hammer, stabbed multiple times, choked, and then had her body set on fire. It appears the people that did this were really were not comfortable with her gender identity! People will kill for someone else not conforming to the male

or the female gender identity they expect in society. In statistics published by the New York State Pride Agenda, the chances of a member of the general public getting murdered are 1 in 18,000. For a transgendered person it is 1 in 12 – not 12,000 but 1 in 12 people! For those who do not pass, the chance of murder is higher.

You should know that there are dangers in taking the hormones. You should know that the negative effects of hormonal therapy include a 40 times greater risk of thromboembolic events than not taking hormones. There is a greater chance of phlebitis, of liver failure, of stroke, of heart attack, and the list goes on. I know of one transsexual who was so anxious to “be a woman” they turned to off-shore pharmacies for hormones. I would have never given this person a letter for an endocrinologist as I felt they were too unstable and not integrated. They were so anxious to become a woman they went from relationship to relationship and handled each of those badly. For some reason, they believed that if they had significant breasts they would be a woman. For a lot of cross-dressers and transsexuals, the possession of breasts for them defines being a woman. It does NOT of course and I work with them on that issue. The person I was speaking of above that turned to off-shore drug supply companies rather than work through a Doctor obtained and ingested much more estrogen than any Dr. would recommend with the thought of getting breasts as fast as possible. This person ended up with phlebitis. Had a blood clot gone to the brain of this individual or to the heart they would probably have died. After this self-treatment, no Dr. would work with this person on

medications because of the history and the risk of possible or probable abuse. So, this person alienated the medical professionals that were really needed. This may be one of the reasons for later events. The same person was also anxious to receive an inheritance so that they could go to Thailand for their GRS surgery. By the way this person chose to go to Thailand because there are clinics there that will do GRS without following the Standards of Care and a letter from a psychiatrist. The inheritance could not come fast enough for this individual. I do not know the details of what happened but this person's body was found hanging from a tree in a wooded area. The assumption was suicide. It could have been that the inheritance was lost or severely delayed and given that no Dr. would work with person because of the self medication. In any event, a life was lost.

Even though taking hormones can have very negative effects, almost all Transsexuals gladly accept these negative effects of taking hormones to get the positive effects. Males who transition to females and take hormones get the benefits of breast growth, the softening of skin, the re-distribution of some body fat, and the reduction of hair growth. Hair growth is reduced everywhere except on the male face. You have to pay an electrologist to do away with facial hair. And alas, taking estrogen does not re-grow hair on the top of a male head that has experienced male pattern baldness. If it did we would probably have a lot of guys that had been bald with a new head of hair and the extra advantage of breasts.

For a FTM (female to male) transsexual when taking testosterone their voice

deepens, they get beard growth, and they may get male pattern baldness. You can't all look like movie stars guys.

A *lot of Transsexuals would rather die than to not be able to transition.* I mean this literally. Suicides are often committed by those who know they are transsexual but have no chance of transitioning and can not face living life with this knowledge. However there are some transsexuals who do not choose to have the surgery but to live their lives as the gender opposite of their anatomical body. These people are called non-op transsexuals. (There are pre-op, post-op, and non-op transsexuals.)

As in every other aspect of life, there is a very large spectrum of individuals in the transgendered and the transsexual group. There are those individuals that are very well integrated, emotionally stable, knowledgeable, kind, intelligent, and informed. Then there are those on the other end of the spectrum that are not that at all. These are the individuals that people look at and say "Oh, my!" They make irrational decisions, can not integrate in public as the gender they feel they are and just do not "fit". They wear totally inappropriate clothes for their surroundings. They do not know how to behave. They "ruffle feathers" of almost everyone. When a person transitions, they have to go through the process of socialization that puberty allows us to do in one gender or the other. When you switch genders, you do not have the advantage of having been through puberty of the gender you are transitioning to. You have to do this. Just as in the general population for some it is easy and for others not so

easy. Unfortunately, many times public opinion sees those on the end of the spectrum who are unstable, not thinking logically or rationally, who are unreasonably emotional, and who reflect negatively on the entire group. Some talk shows have exploited this doing many people a great injustice for ratings. Yet other talk shows and television specials have done a wonderful job trying to explain Gender Identity Disorder.

There are those transsexuals that have transitioned that just want to blend in to the population and enjoy their life. They are the transsexuals that have “gone stealth”. Some just want to be soccer moms, drive the kids to school in the SUV, bake cookies for the PTA, and have a normal life as a wife and mother. They are the people who are therapists, nurses, doctors, programmers, secretaries, and executives. There are many people that have done that! There are many moms that you see whom you could never tell used to be a male. There are many men who you might work with who used to be a woman. One of these people may be sitting next to you right now. Hopefully they are. Hopefully you never know and hopefully you accept them as the wonderful people that they are. The loving, caring, wonderful people they are shows through.

When you make the decision to transition, you may have a difficult time transitioning on your job. Often people who knew you as the “old” gender have a difficult time accepting and relating to you in the “new” gender. If you are not fully integrated, you will probably have trouble doing this or forever be seen as “that person”. When you transition on

the job there are correct and incorrect ways of doing so. You can not “go back and forth” showing up one day as Don and the next as Doris and hope for the transition to work. You will probably neither be accepted by the men or the women at work if you do this. You will be left out of social circles entirely not fitting in anywhere. The individual that does this will sometimes then wonder why nobody relates to them.

There is a boys club at work and a girls club at work. Old relationships will not be the same. No matter which way you transition, the relationships that were there will not be the same. There were confidences shared in the “old club” and those can not be shared. The things you said to the group of girls can not now be said to the group of guys. The things you told the guys will not be appropriate to share with the girls. People knowing you in the “old” way may not feel comfortable reacting to you in the “new” way. I had a friend that (when I was a male) I spent a lot of time with at work. We worked on the same project, he asked me to his church, we talked about the work environment, we commiserated together about work, and I had dinner in his house, and met his family. After I announced I was a transsexual and would be transitioning, he told me that he would support me till the end of time and that he would always be there for me. After my operations and my transition, he did not speak to me and will not answer my calls to this day. There are those “best friends” who will never speak to you again and there are best friends you will make for a lifetime.

Sometimes the biggest problem faced in the workplace when a person is in transition is what restroom they will use. You can NOT walk into the men's room wearing a skirt and high heels. That would put you in danger. Yet some employers insist on this until a person has had Sexual Reassignment Surgery.

Some of the women in the workplace may not feel at all comfortable reacting to you in "their" restroom as a woman if you are transitioning from a man to a woman.

Sometimes genetic women have extremely irrational fears of what might happen with a transsexual in the restroom.

These fears are groundless and completely irrational. Women and men use restrooms every day with complete strangers they know nothing about and for the most part nothing unacceptable happens. However, employers have been known to insist that the transitioning person not even be allowed to use ANY restroom at the place of business and to go across the street and use the dirty restroom in a gas station. Clearly this is not acceptable!

There are several ways of handling these situations in a rational and compassionate and logical non-threatening manner. Any incident that happens in a restroom should be handled in the normal manner. If an incident happens on the workplace in a men's or women's restroom that is inappropriate, there are rules to handle the situation. New rules don't have to be made. New policies don't have to be implemented. If a woman is harassed in the restroom

now by another woman, that incident will be addressed by management. Nothing else needs to be said except that transsexuals should be allowed to use the restroom of the gender they are presenting in. Do not force a MTF transsexual wearing a blouse, skirt, and heels to use the men's restroom! That is deliberately putting that person's safety and emotional condition at risk.

As a person that transitions, you can not be expected to fully feel emotionally how all these things and a world of others will affect you. But you should definitely know about them. You should read about them, you should research what you can about them; you should talk to your therapist about them. Sometimes you feel as if you are all alone in the transition, that everyone and society has abandoned you. I believe you must read about women if you are transitioning MTF (the other way around if FTM). I agree with Helen Boyd (*My Husband Betty*) that you should not announce to your wife that you want to let your feminine side out and then sit in your lazy chair wearing a skirt and heels watching football and smoking a cigar while your wife is in the kitchen doing dishes. If you are going to be a woman, then know about suffrage, struggles, oppression, violence and rape against women. Knowing how to put on mascara does not make you a woman.

I began by stating that I was now very happy in life. Finally, I'll explain why. ***One of the benefits of making my decision was finding out who I truly am.*** I can not express this strongly enough. How many of us go through life never having to make decisions that show us what we

are made of? How many of us go through life never understanding who we really are, being happy in that person, and feeling truly content? I now feel truly content. Yes, there are things to work on. I am always striving to be a better person. I would like a partner—someone to love and cuddle with. I have a lot of dedicated true love to share. That will come or it will not. But I am open to the possibility and do enjoy dating, dinners, dancing, and being with friends.

The second thing I've discovered that I am happy about is finally being able to develop several personality traits I am love in myself. It takes a lot of courage to make this decision to transition. It takes a lot of courage as a male to put that skirt on, put the heels on, and go out in public for the first time. Many male and very masculine Marines, Navy Seals, and paratroopers who have transitioned have stated they would rather go into combat under live fire than to go out in public cross-dressed for the first time. (One of my girlfriends who is lesbian said the same thing – no malls or skirts for her!) It is far easier to face an enemy with a bullet than to face the public and its scrutiny of gender.

Third, you have to believe in who you are and have confidence in who you are. You have to have confidence in yourself. How precious a gift this is: "to have confidence in yourself.

Fourth, you can finally be who you really are inside. In discussing the problems a transitioning person may have with their children some say "I'm still the same person inside." Yes this is true but you've hidden that person inside for so long from everyone they don't

know about that person and so, they are confused by this "new" person who is in their lives all of a sudden, quite unexpectedly, and quite unwanted at times. Now the transitioning person can feel free to do the kinds of things they have never done before.

In my case, I have released the therapist in me that has been sitting inside with a degree that was unused. I have allowed myself to be a public speaker on Transgender Issues. I am leading support groups for transgendered people, their families, spouses, and children. I am marching in Pride parades for marriage and gender equality. I am going to national conventions and making friends and professional associations with nationally and internationally known authors, activists, and public speakers. I am speaking to the public about these issues so that more people will not be brutally murdered for being who they are. I have new friends and enjoying them as I never would have before. I have a web site: transgendertherapist.com an am educating those who visit it.

I have found some of the joys of being a female. There is nothing comparable in the male world like being a female and having a girlfriend you can call up and confide in, a girlfriend you can help when she is really down or just tells you she really NEEDS a piece of chocolate. Men may say "You want a piece of chocolate." but girlfriends know what you mean when you say you need a piece of chocolate.

Women can be used. Women can be hurt emotionally men do it all the time. Some say it is easier to hurt a woman

emotionally than a man. This is not necessarily so. When a woman has something to handle that is emotional it is very necessary to have a girlfriend to talk to about the problem. You need someone in your life to listen to you. Not solve the problem because only you can do that. But you need someone to listen to you!

I find all these new relationships and roles extremely satisfying. I am finally helping people and feeling great about it. I am participating in events in the large metropolitan geography I live in as a

Update Kathleen OBrien.

Kathleen is still employed as a computer programmer at a major NE Utility and is recognized as an LGBT subject matter expert. She currently sees clients as an LMSW including those clients that are LGBT.

She is an advocate and activist for LGBTQ issues and is working with several centers throughout the Hudson Valley in NY on their clinical staffs and as an organizer of LGBTQ activities.

Her website is:

www.transgendertherapist.com.

respected transgender person of note. I am finally me and even though I have problems like everyone else, I am finally content in my life and contentment brings true happiness!