

Choosing to Transition

Saturday, 06 August 2005

In the past few months since my decision to start transitioning I have come to the realization that many people think that this decision is not well thought through and somewhat ill conceived. I think that many of us transsexuals encounter this type of attitude from many who do not fully understand just what it takes to come to this decision. Maybe through this article I can cast a bit of light on what it takes and to dispel some of the misunderstandings, confusion and prejudices we have to face.

At the outset it may be good to first define what I mean by transition within the context of this article so as not to cause any further confusion. What I mean by transition is the act of starting and continuing to completion the transformation of ones physical self from the gender of birth i.e. male in my case, to the gender of choice i.e. female, through medical, psychological and social intervention. This is not a perfect definition but I think it will do.

It should be understood that none of us just wake up one morning and decide that maybe it would be nice to be a member of the opposite sex. We have all over a period of many years been involved in an internal turmoil about just who and what we really are. For some this struggle starts while we are still very young and may endure for many long years and even decades. This turmoil has profound influences on all areas of our lives resulting in choices that affect us for life. Sometimes these choices we make are influenced by social, spiritual and physical factors and are made so as to ALLOW US TO conform to what we think we should be in order to fit into the mould expected of us. We live our lives trying to fit until we realize that a square plug doesn't fit very well, and definitely not very comfortably, into a round hole. We sometimes just don't know the truth about our situation, but what we do know is that we are uncomfortable and almost always feel like we are trapped. However, when we start to try and find out what it is that we are struggling with and we finally come to know the truth it is as if WE are set free to be who we were really meant to be. This sounds so great and believe you me it is. One of the most liberating experiences anyone can go through is to find out exactly who and what they are. Wow, I don't think I could even begin to describe quite what it was like for me.

This end of one turmoil is however only the beginning of another. You now know who you are but now what do you do about it. You can choose to continue to live just as you always have been, a square plug in a round hole and in a sense still be trapped or you can choose to change. What kind of change and how? As the definition above states it is to change your physical self from the gender of birth to the gender of choice. If you choose to go through with this change it will result in a change in your outward physical appearance. Needless to say those people around you and closest to you will begin to see these changes and start to ask questions. In the beginning it is easy to dismiss them but eventually you will not be able to hide the evidence any longer. When this happens it will become time to answer some very difficult questions with some potentially very far reaching consequences.

So, before proceeding with any kind of a decision to transition you need to think very carefully about the consequences of your choices.

First and foremost you need to consider your family and your home situation. What is your marital status? Do you have children? How close are you to your immediate, and extended family? These relationships can be very seriously effected by a choice to transition. Are you prepared to loose your family? Just how important are they to you? You may be fortunate to have some family members who will stand by you but many may reject you completely. Your spiritual and social upbringing can have a profound influences on the way your family may react. I think that at this stage it may start to become clear that this choice is not an easy one. You may however decide you need to think of number one first and be selfish in your choice. Maybe you are not close to your family and so don't really care about what they say.

You may then have to consider your work situation. Will you be able to transition in your work place? What will the reaction be from your colleagues, management, subordinates, customers and anyone else you need to interact with from a work perspective? The chances are very high that you may not be able to continue working in you current place of employment. Can you afford to loose your job? Can you afford the loss of income? Even if you have good strong supportive family members or a spouse who understands, the stress caused by financial difficulties can definitely complicate and influence even the strongest relationships. If you do lose your job, how slim do you think your chances are of getting employment as a transsexual? It ISN'T looking like such a wakeup one morning decision anymore.

What about your friends? How do you think many of them are going to react to your changes? I have found that many say its ok and they will stand by you, but when they start to see the changes really taking effect they are embarrassed to know you and withdraw. Rumours spread very quickly and before you know it you are something that even you wouldn't recognize even if you bumped into yourself in broad daylight. This can be a good time to find out who your true friends are but even they may withdraw for a time as they try to deal with what they are thinking and feeling. This is a time when you as a person need as much emotional and psychological support as you can get and friends are the ones you normally rely on most. Many will not know how to relate to you for a while. Do they relate to you as a man or as a woman? What can they expect from you with regards to sexual attraction? Are you gay or straight? You will also be going through major emotional and psychological changes and this may influence your feelings towards some of your friends. It doesn't look like a very rosy picture so far does it.

Then there is the question of your religious affiliation. It doesn't matter what religion you subscribe to, you may find very strong opposition from within that community. Depending on how involved you are it can become very traumatic to suddenly find yourself ostracized by the very community you WILL need the most during times of crisis.

This sounds like just so much doom and gloom. How could anyone even consider making a choice that would result in so many negative consequences. That is the whole point of this article. When a transsexual decides to take the step and start on the road to transformation it has not been done lightly. It has been done with a great deal of thought and even though they may have to face many and possibly all of the consequences of their choices they can't but make that choice. I'm not transsexual because I think it might be nice or fun or because it might be exciting to change my gender. I am transsexual because I am and unless I am true to myself and become what I was always meant to be I will never be totally free and happy. I will never be able to say "I LOVE ME", and unless I can love myself how could I ever truly love anyone else?

In closing then, before you judge us and write us off for being unstable and whimsical, consider just what it takes to be who we are and to take the choices we make.