

# Polare Edition 46

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## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

**W**ith an unexpected synchronicity which is so frequent that it has almost become expected synchronicity, Elizabeth and I both chose the same basic topic for our respective (but seldom respectful and never respectable) columns, namely the need for solidarity in our little (but convoluted) corner of the world.

The cover design I chose for this issue, from a magazine only five months younger than I am [wheeze, dribble] seems to support the view that it takes all kinds to make a world. The dapper artist with his wasp-waisted suit, Panama hat, brush and easel may seem to have little in common with the languid unclad mermaid sunbaking on the rock beside him, but they co-exist and, judging by their expressions, do so happily.

Some years ago now I was invited to join a beginning organisation which wanted a better deal for transgenders (who were then usually called transsexuals). I went to the first meeting, which started an hour late and was as well organised as a Martian fire-drill (and I don't want a lot of letters from you Martians out there, calling me politically incorrect!)

It was suggested that we throw in our lot with the gay and lesbian movement, in order to capitalise on their numbers and considerable progress toward human and legal rights. Although I am a lesbian, I did not see why we should piggy-back on the achievements of another group and suggested, sarcastically, that if we were looking for an oppressed group to join, maybe we should throw in our lot with the women's movement. And then I left.

I think now that I may have been over-conscious of the public's tendency to assume that transsexualism was a variation on homosexuality or lesbianism, and I may have wanted us to demonstrate our separateness and our right to be considered as an independent entity and not as another "sexuality".

I have mellowed with the passing of the years and am more prepared now to accept support from larger segments of society which have experienced social problems similar to those of the transgender community. I am also prepared to work as hard as I can for the rights of smaller sub-groups who may not have come as far as we have.

I hope, therefore, that all segments of our community who find themselves marginalised by ignorance and refused basic rights through bigotry will band together to amend the wrongs done to us, and the rights withheld from us, by those who consider us transgressive.

Incidentally, the item on page 29 concerning M.S.N.'s transphobic referral to a porn site of people using "transsexualism" as a search term has been partially sorted, presumably following the storm of protest from trans people around the world. Use of the term "intersex" on M.S.N., however, still results in referral to a porn site. So ... get those emails flying on behalf of those who are intersexed. All for one and one for all!

## Feature Articles



**If we want to stop being victims, we must take responsibility for our choices, even those choices which are almost unfathomable to most in this heterosexist culture.**

### Do Transsexuals have a Choice?

Callan Williams believes that we have no choice in being born with a predisposition to transgender, but we do choose what to do about it. The notion of choice, and taking responsibility for that choice is crucial to our being able to become the best we can be in this world.

### My Wife was a Victim Too!

We've all talked about the initial reactions to our disclosures about our gender issues, but there is so much more to it than that. Kim's partner has been through hell with all of this. She formulated dreams of her own that were not for her so much as for her and Kim.

### Drugs are Dangerous, Drugs Can Kill

Kathy suggests that transgender women be monitored for prolactin levels, breast and prostate cancer prior to embarking on oestrogen treatment and during hormone therapy and that regular tests be conducted for liver and kidney function, testosterone and oestrogen levels.

### Sam & Rachael

Sam, a 33yo F.T.M. and Rachel, a 29yo M.T.F. have been legally married for the past eight years. Sam is also Rachel's full-time carer. In this article they talk about life together, Rachel's, quadriplegia, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder.

### The Road Less Travelled

Not the difficult road we all know so well, but the even harder road that is taken by those who turn back because they cannot bear to hurt the ones they love. They sacrifice their own dream of happiness, possibly jeopardise their very survival for the sake of that love.

# Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

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In the last couple of issues I have changed the format of my report in order to address community issues that have surfaced over that time. I would like to continue in that vein for at least this issue of *Polare* since there is another area that I think should be addressed and which has the capacity to impact negatively on our community. That issue, put simply, is divisiveness.

I was impressed at the positive coverage that was afforded the transgender community in the gay press during April and May. In the April edition of *Lesbians On The Loose* (L.O.T.L.), the cover story featured an interview with a transgender lesbian which was further complemented by an article on gender and a supportive letter in the letters to the editor. The May edition of *L.O.T.L.* carried a number of letters to the editor in response to the pieces in the previous edition and these too were strongly supportive.

In the Sydney Star Observer's first edition for May the front page was dedicated to a story on discussions being held between the *N.S.W.* Attorney General's Department and representatives of Sex and Gender Education (S.A.G.E.). This too gave highly positive coverage to the efforts of *S.A.G.E.* in promoting the rights of sex and gender diverse people and the Attorney General's commitment to the establishment of uniform laws across all states of Australia to protect those rights. Though not mentioned in the article I would also like to acknowledge the tireless work of the *N.S.W.* Anti-Discrimination Board, and its president Chris Puplick, for their efforts in seeking to bring about this change.

I would also like to commend *S.A.G.E.* and its members for the visible activist presence they have generated in such a short time span since their inception. I cannot stress too highly the Gender Centre's commitment to supporting the aims and objectives of *S.A.G.E.*.

So what has all this got to do with divisiveness?

Sadly there are still individuals and groups within the community that choose to distance themselves in one form or another from other individuals and groups, and this distancing seems to occur for a variety of reasons. First there is the old, and obviously not yet worn out, view that if you are post-operative you are somehow more valid and therefore entitled to better treatment. I discuss this from a human rights perspective and not an academic treatise into what makes someone a man or a woman. The validity view seems to me to be an elitist view that disregards the importance of gender-identity or worse still links it to a surgical procedure. Is there any post-operative transsexual who can honestly say that surgery was the key factor in establishing their identity? Indeed the real truth lies in the reverse equation. It is gender identity that justifies surgery not surgery that justifies gender-identity. Nobody can access surgery without first living for a substantial period of time in their new sex role.

The elitist argument not only penalises those in the community who choose to be non-operative, but also those who do not have the means to pay the high costs associated with surgery or for medical reasons cannot undergo such procedures. It equally disregards the vast majority of female-to-males who for these, and more complex reasons, do not proceed with lower half surgery.

It further adopts the risky argument that gender-identity is based on a physical criterion. What if an oppressive bureaucracy decided to change the goal posts and nominate a physical criterion we are unable to achieve such as chromosomal make up? That would leave us all out in the cold. The only persuasive criteria is self-determination based on our own conviction of our gender-identity and in respect of human rights we should all be advocating for that position.

The other area where there seems to be an alarming degree of divisiveness is in the politicking, (and bickering), of various groups within the community. It seems to occur between groups operating intrastate, groups operating interstate and groups operating nationally. It occurs between groups purporting to represent only certain sections of the community, women only, men only, intersex only and so on. And, more often than not, it occurs for silly reasons such as an irrational fear that if a group works in conjunction with other groups it will somehow lose its identity or compromise its area of expertise, or simply because members of different groups don't like each other. In the first of these cases the reverse is true. By working in collaboration and establishing strong interconnected networks a group's identity is strengthened and its expertise valued. In the case of the latter, not liking someone is a good reason not to invite them to your next dinner party, it is a pathetically poor reason for refusing to work with them when failure to do so works to the detriment of the community.

None of the gains that have been achieved over the years were achieved by any one group in isolation. They were achieved in a collaborative approach that involved not only members of the community, transgender or intersex, men or women, pre-operative or post-operative, but also a wide range of allies outside the community, politicians, bureaucrats, medicos and many others who saw the discrepancies in the human rights afforded transpeople and joined in a commitment to bring about change. We owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to all those other people who have embraced our cause, to work together in the spirit of community to ensure that transpeople achieve a level playing field in the pursuit of human rights.

Earlier in this report I acknowledged a few of the individuals and groups outside the transgender community who have rallied in support of our cause. These are just a few of many and I included them specifically to illustrate the importance, indeed the necessity, of working with dedication and collaboration if we have any hope of achieving desired outcomes. If we have differences, and we inevitably will, be they philosophical, political or personal we should put them aside in pursuit of our common goals and the common good.

There is enduring truth in the maxim, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall"

**Footnote:** The second edition in May of Sydney Star Observer featured a comprehensive article from Chris Puplick, President of the *A.D.B.*, outlining their stance on changes to *N.S.W.* and National laws relating to the transgender community.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

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# Do Transsexuals have a Choice?

To Be Able to Choose is to Be Empowered in This World.

by Callan Williams 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: June 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**Not every choice is for something, we often choose against something.**

**I** believe that we have no choice about being born with a predisposition to transgender, no choice to be transsexual or whatever other word you use to describe it, but we do choose what we want

to do about it. The notion of choice, and of taking responsibility for that choice is crucial to our being able to become the best we can be in this world. To be able to choose is to be empowered in this world.

***If we want to stop being victims, we must take responsibility for our choices, even those choices which are almost unfathomable to most in this heterosexist culture.***

Many transsexuals argue that they have no choice but to have surgery, that they have no choice over the chain of events that leads them to surgery. For some, this fundamental tenet of faith is so strong that they feel if a person feels they have choice over S.R.S., they are not really a transsexual, for transsexuals

have no choice. This is a key part of their history, and many get distressed when anyone talks about the choices a transsexual person has to make in this world.

Where do choices end for transsexuals? They choose where they go for surgery. They choose when to have surgery. They choose how to pay for surgery. They choose to have a graft or not. They choose where to transition, choose how and what to tell their friends and family. They even choose what they wear to and from the hospital. People choose all these things, but many insist that they don't actually choose to gender shift and have surgery. You may wonder what they would have done if surgery was not an option, as it wasn't until about forty years ago. Life is about the cycle of death and rebirth, and we all choose to die in some way and be reborn, though the death of the physical body is the ultimate choice.

## Rational Choices

I actually had one transsexual argue that no rational person would choose gender shift and surgery, so therefore it can't be a rational choice. Is it a rational choice for a cross-dresser to put on a dress and go to the mall? The rationality of decisions is very much about the way you view the options. This culture wants to convince us that no rational person would do either, and enforces that decision with stigma. Who would choose to take the pain that one has in telling their mother, their kids, their wife that they choose to change gender and/or sex, if even temporarily? Heterosexism requires the separation of men and women, and works hard to tell us that to cross that line is a horrible and bizarre thing. But it isn't, or at least that is the message of the transgender paradigm.

The difference seems to be as simple as the difference between "I had no other choice but to have surgery" and "I felt I had no other choice but to have surgery." The first statement denies any possibility of other choices, while the second affirms that we saw surgery as the right choice for us, whatever the drawbacks.

I do understand that many transsexual people who have chosen gender shift and surgery do feel they had no other choice, that they had exhausted their other options, but that is not unique to transsexuals. The ability to relinquish responsibility for our actions because we saw no other choice than to drink, leave, kill, (or any other action) opens up an excuse for all. This makes me very uncomfortable.

I believe that transsexual people who choose surgery make the best choice they can under the circumstances, but actually going through with gender shift and surgery has been made to seem so selfish and hare-brained that they choose to claim no choice in the matter. "I didn't want to do it! I had to! My nature forced me into it!"

Gender shift and surgery are fine and honourable choices, not selfish or hare-brained. They are often the best choice that we can make to get on with our lives. I applaud and admire their choice, as a transgendered and a transsexual person to bring their gender role and body into harmony.

## Stigma and the Closet

If it was easier to make the choice to gender shift, we would not have so many transgender people twisted by the closet, torn apart by being impaled on the horns of the dilemma of which way to turn. We wouldn't have to wait until everything else in our life is gone before

we chose to walk through the wall of gender, and much of the pain of living with stigma would be lessened and we could get on with our lives and our contributions to the world.

But the model that says transsexualism is a disease, a birth defect, means it is something to run from and deny, not to be proud of. I know many cross-dressers who longed to be transsexual because that was explainable, took you out of the range of making a choice to change clothes. But today even many transsexuals reject that illness model.

James Green was talking to a big old shrink at an American Psychological Association convention. When he told the shrink that he was talking about transgender, transsexuality, the shrink replied "I don't think God makes mistakes". James simply answered, "Neither do I." We are not mistakes, just humans with special gifts and challenges, like any other human. We can choose to see our transgendered nature as a curse, or simply another way humans are born.

This is a big deal. Do we actually have choice over how we live our lives, even if we don't have choice over who we are? Are we slaves to the world, or do we control our destiny by the choices we make?

## What is Choice?

Much of this discussion rides on how we define 'choice'. It is clear that our choices are based on both biological predisposition and a wide range of other environmental factors, and it is possible to argue that humans are merely victims of their genetic and cultural programming, and have no true choice. You can argue that humans are so limited by their history that free choice, free will is not an option, we are just meat puppets. But to make that argument is to take away our responsibility for change, for transformation. If we are only slaves to our past, then we have no personal responsibility or personal freedom. We become only a part of the collective, not individuals. Robert Schuller preaches on the fact that this century has been one of collectivism, of serving the machine, but the pendulum is swinging back in the next century to the individual. He reminds us of our individual responsibility and choice, "If it is to be, it is up to me!"

Transgendered people make individual choices. It is clear that well over 90 percent of people in this culture don't have massive discomfort at living in a standardised gender role. Transgender people don't ask for the ability to change the role of everyone, but the ability of individuals to define their own role, either crossing the sex/gender line permanently or exploring the turf around it. We don't choose for the culture as a whole, but we do claim the right to choose for ourselves, to not simply take what is issued at birth.

Not every choice is for something, we often choose against something. We choose not to be men, but does that mean we choose to be women? For some of us we do, but for others the choice is more complex. For many of us we choose not to choose, but to let the world push us where it will, yet does that mean that we haven't made a choice?

We always make the best choice we can even if we don't understand why we made the choice. Even when we make choices that appear self-destructive we are choosing to destroy something that is haunting us. We often choose to paint ourselves into a corner so that the only choice left is the one we want, or the one that we think we deserve and so we get it without seeming to make a choice. This is especially true of choices that carry such stigma as transgender and sexual orientation. We are so afraid of being shunned, isolated, separated for simply doing what will satisfy us that we try to abdicate the choice.

## The Fear of Choice

Erica Jong notes that one reason people are so afraid of choice is because it seems so easy to make the wrong one. It's so easy, especially in a culture where choice is frowned on, one that socializes us to serve the machine, to become homogenized. People club us about our choices. "If you really loved me, you would never hurt me this way!" When our choices are not about hurting them but rather about finding what we need. We become gun-shy and afraid of losing love and connection, so we try to find ways to not be isolated, to not have to take the responsibility and the consequences of our choices. We need to believe we are lovable for who we are, not just because we choose to do what others want us to.

We also recognise that taking responsibility for our choices now means we always had responsibility for our choices and then we have to forgive ourselves our past transgressions, which is hard for anyone. Learning to love ourselves unconditionally, not just for what we did or didn't do but simply for what we are, is the basis of learning to love others that way.

## More Choices Than Ever

As others have noted, the range of choice that is open to us is expanding geometrically. We have choices of communication, of travel, of medical treatments, of lives that were unknown just a few years ago and the possibilities that are just over the horizon are even more boggling. We are not living in a world that is getting more simple, but one that is getting vastly more complex, where the range of choice will allow any individual to become who they want to be.

The simple fact that we have so much more information available to us opens up our choices immensely. We now see options we would not have known existed before. To be prepared to handle this range, we have to start teaching kids to make intelligent choices, not merely to follow rote patterns. We can't simply crave going back to a simpler time. It isn't going to happen, and those simple times weren't really all that much fun because we were chastised, stigmatized, humiliated and declared criminal for the choices we made that seemed 'anti-social'. The drug problem is a good example. While some people tried to have kids 'just say no', those in recovery found that they couldn't kick until they took responsibility for their own choices, and trusted, rather than fought, the callings of their 'higher power'.

Society has an interest in making the choice to be transgender, or to live as a gay person, or lots of other choices, as difficult as possible. The easier the choice, the more people will take it, and that may be seen as a destabilizing force. If people thought they could choose to change without stigma, they would, and where would we be then? There are reasons that the hurdles for S.R.S. are so high,

reasons the gatekeepers fight so hard and that we become who they expect us to be in order to get what we want and what we need.

## Taking Responsibility for Choices

I watched Martine Rothblatt confound an interviewer on local television. As the interviewer tried to get the 'no choice' phrase out of her, she simply said she had lived as a man and had always wanted to live as a woman, and her wife and kids thought it was okay, so she did. The interviewer looked stymied, not understanding how anyone would gender shift just because they chose to. Gender shift is so drastic, so irreversible, so weird, so isolating. Why would anyone choose to do this? But Martine knows that she made a choice for change. It was her time and her way. She was born transgendered, and she chose to gender shift.

We have no choice in the gender we are assigned by our parents, no choice in what they expect us to wear, to do. For them it is a simple process of only looking at what is between our legs, not what is in our hearts. Some children like red shirts, others blue ones. Do we look for a cause in these choices? Could we find one if we did? But when some children with penises prefer dresses and some children with vaginas prefer no dresses, we look for a cause. Why are these choices different? Because the world says they are, that's all.

## The Pressure to Make the 'Right' Choice

I understand the enormous pressure that comes from growing up gender-queer, transgendered, or even transsexual in this culture. To know what is expected of you was somehow contrary to your nature. I understand that for many, the pressure is so intense that choosing surgery is the only choice they see for happiness and that many of us were in so much pain that they saw the choice between surgery and death as the only choice at all.

But taking responsibility for your choices in no way diminishes the pain and suffering you felt. In fact, taking responsibility confirms your ability to do something about your pain and suffering.

By choosing to gender shift, have S.R.S. or transgress gender in other ways, you cease to be a victim to the pressure the outside world puts on you to conform to gender standards. We are shaped by peer pressure whether we resist it or conform to it, but by choosing our own path we become not merely followers or reactionaries, but actively responsible for shaping our own life and future.

## Choices and Power

Declaring the ability to choose the shape and direction of our life gives us the power to transcend our history, to become more than slaves to our predisposition and our environment. Our choices will be shaped by who we are and where we have been, but they will not be limited by that. I have a role that I wouldn't have chosen for myself given the stigmas of this culture, but somehow it feels like the absolutely right choice. This is the dilemma of humans.

Think of the people who moan: "I have no choice but to go to work because of the bills!" But you can reduce the bills, choose to live more simply, choose other work. You do have choices, even if some of them require you to do unpleasant things, to renounce something you want now in order to get something you want more later. When you choose to work for long-term happiness, you have stopped being a victim, and that means you are in control.

The point is that, whatever limits we have to free will, in the long run it is our choices, not the least of which is how we choose to see the world, that determines the ultimate direction of our life, and determines our ultimate happiness. It only takes a little bit of choice to make a big difference to any human life. We can transcend our history. We are humans.

If we want to stop being victims, we must take responsibility for our choices, even those choices which are almost unfathomable to most in this heterosexist culture. We must be able to satisfy ourselves, to become congruent and whole, even if some people think we are just plain nuts.

Even if we simply say "I didn't choose to kill myself and put an end to other's embarrassment with me, rather I chose to live in a way that I could be happy and effective," we need to take pride in our choices.

To paraphrase what JoAnn Roberts often reminds us, in the words of John Steakley, "You are what you choose to do when it counts." Once we have control of and responsibility for our own lives. And we don't simply give in to nature or the culture, then we can start to become full and complete individuals.

And to me, that choice is worth working very, very hard for.

### Callan Williams

**From Callan's website:** 📧 Hi! I'm Callan. You might like to know a little about me to put all this text [on her website] in context. I'm not sure that's a good idea - I wrote all this text to put myself in context. It's the result of writing as a process of self discovery, making choices of words and though those choices, glimpsing the meaning which I hold.

If I had to tell you one thing before you read this stuff, it's that I'm funny. It's not just that I think I am funny, but co-workers and audiences who have seen me as one of the "drama queens" have shown they find me funny too. I'm not sure, though, that it's obvious to others when you can't hear my voice or see my face. "You know, if people could see you when you said these outrageous things, I don't think they would panic quite so easily", said one co-worker. People who know me hear my voice in these texts, but people who have never met me often find them a bit, well, dense, pompous and supercilious. I just smile and know that when people don't know a voice, they tend to



read in their own voice.


I'm not quite sure how to tell you to get through all this text [on her website]. It's not laid out in any nice linear fashion, like a hierarchical class, and I'm not sure it could be. It was around 1984 when I realized I was not a vector-head, thinking in lines, but a net-thinker, focused on nodes and connections. What delights me are connecting dots, stepping away from something, coming at it from a different angle, and seeing how it is connected to other things. This is one reason there are so many posts here which stand on their own, because they were written to take an active view of the subject being discussed rather than a reactive view.

I agree with Steven Covey when he writes "Freedom exists in the moment between stimulus and response". I believe we need to create conscious responses, not autonomic reactions, and that means questioning assumptions, unwiring old patterns and seeing things afresh.

I know material [on her website] will challenge your assumptions, things you accept as obvious. My goal, though, isn't to give final answers but to raise questions. I like the answers I have found so far, but even more I like seeing where my answers have flaws, where there is a truth, a narrative which questions my assumptions. Take me on an intellectual roller-coaster ride anytime - "Connections" with James Burke, anyone?

The other thing you can't see here is how queer I am. I may tend to tasteful suits from Rena Rowan, but even in a banker's suit, I am usually the queerest person in the room. My words and my dress may speak to quiet, conservative classicism, but my attitudes are about transformation, reinvention and questioning the status-quo, even when the status-quo is for individual freedom.

I believe in the role of the parent, in social order, in taking responsibility for an effective and healthy society which is a good place for kids to grow up. Freedom comes with cost, and the first cost is facing your own fears, doing your own healing, so you can interact with people from a centered place rather than from wounds and fears. We start dependent, then we claim independence in adolescence, and then as adults we have the obligation for inter-dependence, working together, making personal sacrifices for the good of the group when that is called for and standing boldly apart when that is called for.

There is text here [on her website]. It will challenge your thinking, it will reach out and comfort you, and not necessarily in equal parts. I don't know you, what you are interested in, so I can't make choices for you, but if you have any questions or comments, [drop me a line](#) .

I'm happy to have you here [on her website]. I hope you find something that makes you laugh or think or even cry on these pages, something that pushes a button inside of you and helps you understand how to take control of that response, helps point to healing a little bit.

As you read these pieces [on her website], you will catch a glimpse of me in the shadows behind the words. More than that, though, you will catch a glimpse of you from how you respond to the reflection of yourself you see in my words. You will see me not just I as I am, you will see me as you are.

My mission statement is something I heard Anne Bolin say at Southern Comfort 1993: "In societies where gender is rigidly bipolar, rituals of gender transgression remind us of our continuous common humanity".

If you find some places where you are reminded of where our continuous common humanity comes together, then I'm happy to have you visit.

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# My Wife was a Victim Too

## Her Dreams, Her Expectations, Her Desires are in Tatters

by Kim

Article appeared in Polare magazine: June 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**She still wants and craves all the very things I can not give her.**

**W**e have all talked about the initial reactions when we come clean about our gender issues, but there is much more to it than that.

***We all often forget the price our loved ones pay too. It is a real price for them just as ours is for us.***

My partner has been through hell with all this, and so have I. We each have our own hells associated with trans issues.

For me, it is all the things I have missed in my life and can never really have, but living true to myself is a huge improvement on where I was. There is so very much that has been missed and can never be replaced. It is a kind of bereavement too. And the Catch twenty-two is that in order to have some of the things I could/should have, I must lose many of the things I value and cherish.

And so it is for my partner. She is still with me and she tries so hard to do her best and to understand, but she has her own problems. She married the whole package. Both the inside and the out as she recognised them. She formulated dreams of her own that were not for her so much as for us. We had children. She was looking forward to times getting better and more secure financially and to a future with a "traditional" (maybe conventional might be a better word) family structure that she never had as a child. She wanted so much for her children from Mummy and Daddy. She was devoted to her husband and expected him to always be there.

She expected to feel his touch, his warmth, have sex with him, times spent together as husband and wife. Holidays, his strength and support and hers given back in return. A million intangible things. Going dancing proudly with her man, shopping, the odd jobs that always need doing that he always did. I can't even begin to list them all, although I have been made aware of them through long discussions.

The thing is, her dreams, her expectations, her desires are in tatters. She can no longer look forward to growing old and enjoying grandchildren together in the same way. It's not the same. She doesn't see me as a man anymore, but I'm not sure she sees me as a woman either. She doesn't want a woman - she never wanted one. She always wanted a man, masculine, strong, supportive - all the things most women want and crave. Now, ten years on she is back where she started but in a worse position than before. She still wants and craves all the very things I can not give her. She still has those tattered dreams that hurt her when she doesn't blank them out. She misses that masculine touch. That tenderness that is mixed with an underlying strength.

But now she is faced with the task of finding someone else if she ever wants to have those things again. It's not fair on her. She never wanted or expected any of this. It's not even her problem at the root of it, but she is most certainly a casualty of it.

She is forced to re-model her dreams, even question her own femininity and sexuality. It is unsettling just when everything was starting to go her way in life. Life has cheated her just as surely as it has cheated me. I often feel that I am responsible for her unhappiness. I feel guilty all the time that I can't give her all her heart desires, but then so does she. She feels guilty that she can't give me everything that my heart desires too.

It takes a very strong person to be able to cope with the burdens that are placed upon them by transition and gender problems. It's not just the transperson, but their partners and loved ones too that have to transition. There may yet be benefits for my partner, but so far she has had the shit end of the wedge as do all partners at this stage.

We all often forget the price our loved ones pay too. It is a real price for them just as ours is for us.



Health.

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# Drugs are Dangerous, Drugs Can Kill

## An Introduction to Some Side-Effects of Oestrogen Hormone Therapy

by Kathy Ann Noble

Article appeared in Polare magazine: June 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Another more common problem with overuse of oestrogen is the possibility of blood thickening and clotting. This can be a significant problem that can cause thrombosis, varicose veins and even strokes.

**W**hy as a transsexual was I never made aware of the possible effects that H.R.T. would have on me? I was put on hormones with no explanation of the side effects or symptoms that I am now encountering. I have had to compare my feelings with pre- and post-menopausal women.

***You may also encounter symptoms of menopause, irritability, emotional outbursts, general emotional instability, spontaneous crying or hot and cold flushes.***

If these symptoms were known as per 'Hormone Therapy - General Outline' on the web, why was I not forewarned? It would have given me an insight into what to expect, rather than finding out after the onset of the symptoms.

I am producing Prolactin naturally and was told initially "Men do not produce this hormone", yet in the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, latest version, it is mentioned on page 11: "A pre-treatment Prolactin level should be obtained and repeated at one, two and three years. If Hyper-prolactemia does not occur during this time, no further measurements are necessary."

Biological males undergoing oestrogen treatment should be monitored for breast cancer and encouraged to engage in routine self-examination. As they age, they should be monitored for prostate cancer. In hormone therapy, Prolactin is put as one of the tests required before actually embarking on H.R.T., along with liver function, kidney function, testosterone levels and oestrogen levels.

My Prolactin was at 1500 and was down to 979 at the last testing. Tests have not been done for several months - why not?

I intend to ask this question at my next meeting with my endocrinologist.

Prolactin is produced during puberty to form the breasts. It is also produced for lactation in pregnant women. Statistics show 30 percent of the general population have Pituitary Adenoma, a non-cancerous benign tumour of the pituitary gland at the base of the brain. Most are unaware of it, and it never causes a problem. This gland controls the sex hormones, body temperature, metabolism, calcium in the blood and to and from the bones. What symptoms are seen depends on which part of the gland the tumour is located in. With H.R.T. these can become quite apparent. The most common is raised blood Prolactin levels in response to oestrogen intake. In transsexuals, if large doses of an oestrogen hormone such as Premarin and Estigyn or if one is put on 'the Pill' in the hope of increasing breast size or speed of breast development this can often have the opposite effect, and can cause lactation ranging from minor nipple discharges to full on 'need nursing pads' type milk production.

This is bothersome and embarrassing. If not controlled, excessive oestrogen levels can lead to eyesight problems by causing the tumour to grow putting pressure on the optic nerves which could lead to eventual blindness. A doubling of the blood Prolactin levels can mean a doubling in tumour size. This is one of the less common problems that can occur. Another more common problem with overuse of oestrogen is the possibility of blood thickening and clotting. This can be a significant problem that can cause thrombosis, varicose veins and even strokes. You may also encounter symptoms of menopause, irritability, emotional outbursts, general emotional instability, spontaneous crying or hot and cold flushes.

At present I am experiencing all of the above and am only coming to terms with the problems because of talking to my women friends. I also suffer hard nipples, sensitive nipples and breasts and itchy breasts that at times appear swollen and are painful to touch. This has been going on for longer than the two or three months after which it is supposed that these feelings subside.

There can also be varying degrees of depression, bouts of unexplained crying similar to 'baby blues' which women suffer after giving birth. I liken this phase to the 'post-operative regret phase'. You have all the redistribution of body fat and hair to contend with. Fat moves from the tummy, back and shoulders to the thighs, hips and bottom. There is usually some weight gain associated with this, which is harder to get rid of than before, and the general rounding of the body into a more female shape is quite noticeable. Upper body strength diminishes and voice may also change, becoming noticeably higher.

Taking Androcur, some notice a change in their fingernails, which become brittle and peel and hair can become dry and brittle. If all of this is known then we should be informed of these possible consequences caused by H.R.T. As far as I can ascertain, no one that I know who is either pre- or post-operative has been made aware. We have, in the main, found out ourselves if we are predisposed to do some research. At present I am at both ends of the scale as I see it, being both into puberty and menopause. I am only now finding out what it all means, as my Prolactin was found to be pumping out in 1997 after checks of my pituitary in 1998 confirmed no tumour. The Prolactin worked its job perfectly, and my entire body started to change. Breasts started to grow, skin texture changed, musculature altered, weepy, softer nature, but no one could explain why, other than to try male H.R.T., which did not work.

It was then decided to go with the female hormones in 1999 and since then I have changed dramatically. I did not go onto female H.R.T. until March 2001, as we wanted to see what my natural Prolactin production would do. From March 2001 there have been more symptoms from introduced hormones, not those made naturally. I had S.R.S. in November 2001 and am extremely happy with my new self, but must admit to the odd occasion recently of wishing to end it all because of all the symptoms and effects they are having on me. It is hard enough for born women to come to terms with their mental and physical changes during menopause, so it must be doubly hard for us to come to terms with all of this. They have to come to terms with puberty as well, but at a different time.

With us it seems all in one, no wonder we tend to flip out. I will survive and not become another transsexual suicide statistic, but now believe I know why so many do opt to end it all. Because of the lack of understanding on my part and the lack of documentation, I have been on the brink several times recently, with no access to professional help available when required.

I have to wait one or two months and could be dead by then. I find this appalling and quite unacceptable!

When, if ever, will this situation alter? With the plethora of litigation and the very high cost of insurance cover, can explanation of how drugs affect people not be addressed? It will not only save lives, but also cause fewer problems and forestall possible future litigation. It would appear that neither the Harry Benjamin nor the Australian Standards of Care are being observed. Is it too much to ask that this situation be corrected and full explanations given to all transsexuals in accordance with the aforementioned standards.

## Kathy Noble

Kathy Noble is the founder of [Agender Australia](#), and [Changeling Aspects](#) , a support group for transgender people located in Brisbane.

With the help of the Gold Coast Hospital Board, Kathy founded the group in 2002 as a support group for people undergoing reassignment surgery. This service ceased in 2004 when the surgeon and hospital ceased performing this surgery.

With the introduction of Agender to Australia in June 2002, Kathy began providing educational support for health care workers, institutions of higher learning and government bodies, lecturing and lobbying government departments, and generally fighting for the rights and dignity of transgender people.

Kathy sadly passed away in August 2015. She was 80.




**Two Lives: A Transsexual's story and the fight for recognition**

Author: Kathy Noble

Publisher: Zeus Publications (2011)

I.S.B.N.-13 978 192173155613.

**From Amazon Books:**  *Two Lives: A Transsexual's story and the fight for recognition* is a heart-wrenching read. The author shares her painful, yet sometimes happy journey through a tormented life that many could not imagine. From early childhood and being born a boy called Frank, Kathy felt something was not right with her gender. As she matured her body shape and physical appearance leant towards female, but it was the turmoil inside her mind that caused her the greatest

anxiety. As a man she married and had a family and tried in vain to be "normal" as society would say, while in private she dressed in her wife's clothes. There would be another marriage and it was in this one that she came out and declared she would be changing her life to the female she always knew she had to be. With sex reassignment surgery Kathy emerged to bravely fight the long, difficult battle for recognition. Kathy's honesty and strength gives the reader a truly informative and insightful look into the subject of transsexuals and their struggle through Government and political departments and laws pertaining to their rights. There is a huge amount of research and documented data contained in this amazing story that will give knowledge and hopefully a better understanding of the transgender community.

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# Sam and Rachael

## Together Despite Much Trauma

by Sam Davies

Article appeared in Polare magazine: June 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

I'm a thirty-three-year-old F.T.M. whom has been legally married to an M.T.F. (Rachel) for the past eight years. She is twenty-nine and I am her fulltime sole carer. I had a double mastectomy four years ago and have been on hormones now for about twenty-two months. Unfortunately due to many complex health issues Rachel can undergo very few gender re-assignment procedures. Such treatment is also far out of reach financially. Rachel lives as a female and we have changed our names to reflect our true genders. Rachel was born with cerebral palsy and has been a quadriplegic from birth. She can, however, speak and has partial movement in her hands and gets around in an electric wheelchair.

***Yes, we join a long list of people in our situation who have been accused of violating Deuteronomy 22:5.***

Rachel developed schizophrenia in her late teens which the doctors have been reluctant to confirm, as she also suffers from post-traumatic syndrome from the brain damage she received at birth. Life for her has had more than its fair share of traumas with hardly anyone taking her claims of gender dysphoria or schizophrenia seriously. But our God knows us so we don't get overly concerned anymore.

I am an active member of the religious organisation I joined nearly thirteen years ago, attending all meetings, conventions and assemblies where permitted, despite our having been excommunicated. Yes, we join a long list of people in our situation who have been accused of violating Deuteronomy 22:5. Never mind, I joined a Bible guided organisation to serve God, not man, who is always making mistakes. I'm happy so I have no complaints. There is nothing more satisfying than doing what I know to be right in our Creator's eyes and being honest. The truth will come out in the end. Being cut off from being able to talk with my friends doesn't bother me too much. What bothers me is having the Creator falsely looked upon as a shallow God who only sees people as flesh and genes as though He has insight only equal or inferior to man.

He doesn't violate his own words such as are found at 1 Samuel 16:7. I have wanted to write for some time but due to my circumstances I have been very reluctant knowing some people may consider me a religious brainwashed nutcase. I don't want to talk about religion in *Polare*. If anyone wishes to talk about the Bible (which I have become very familiar with over the past thirteen years) and what it may or may not say they can write to me personally. Religion makes me sick, the Bible doesn't.

Putting religion aside, my life has been seen by some as intimidating, even scary. Scary? Yes, scary. Or maybe it's my irritating honesty which has got me into trouble several times during my interesting and apparently unbelievable life of thirty-two years that tends to leave people just not quite sure what to say to me. But after living with a quadriplegic schizophrenic transsexual my life couldn't really be expected to end up dull could it? But enough of the prattle, here's some more about myself.

I was born in 1969 and my parents chose to name me Samantha Louise not knowing that the tiny petite baby with shocking blond hair and blue eyes they held was actually Sam Luke Anthony. Oh well, these things take time to come out sometimes.

We moved from Britain to Australia when I was three and a half years of age and travelled Australia for about two years. The bush became truly infused into my blood and young but sad heart. Plants and animals were my only happiness. I knew there was something very wrong with my life, but at such a tender age I couldn't be expected to know why I was uncomfortable around people and indeed even uncomfortable by myself, but I was soon to find out.

Yes, I played with children, at least I tried, but they were not very co-operative so that didn't last long. I approached other little boys, but they told me to go away and play with the girls. I protested and said I wasn't a girl and wanted to play with them.

They didn't agree with my claim to boyhood and when one of them pushed me over in the sandpit I laid into him. There was no competition - I flattened him even though I was smaller. The boys could only look at me in silent fear having never come across any "girl" who fought - let alone with clenched fist. I could not force them to play, I realised. I left the pit and searched for what I knew and loved, the bush and the wildlife. Maybe I could find some better company such as my favourite creepy crawly, the spider, or maybe I could find one of those interesting insect eating plants which I sometimes showed to mum.

Hoping I could stay around the adults for company, especially the men, I sought them out when not with the wildlife. But who was I fooling? Before I knew it I found myself in a place they called school - surrounded by little people with no means of escape. If this wasn't bad enough, wait until I wanted to go to the toilet. Innocently making my way to the boys toilets I was redirected by my female teacher. My pleas that I was a boy and had to go to the boys' toilets fell on deaf ears and I was led reluctantly into the girls' loo. There was nothing I could do. I was about to wet myself and the teacher was a lot bigger than me. It was then that the horror really hit me. I was a

boy with a girl's body and there was no way I could prove it. The sausage-like piece of flesh which I was sure was going to sprout in between my legs any day was refusing to come to my defence. I was alone.

Through fourteen torturous years of school I found my only outlet for my frustration was to use my fighting talents and my hatred of any injustice to defend people. So from day one I intervened whenever I saw someone getting beaten up or picked on so that I very soon earned a reputation for keeping school bullies in check. After I gave a boy a bloody nose during a lesson in fourth year teachers would even threaten their misbehaving students with being sat next to me if they didn't behave. I was an explosive keg of anger, which of course led some boys who were a little adventurous to rub me up the wrong way to see me in action, especially if they could do it in class. I usually waited until lunchtime to let the offending individual do battle with me.

When I was eight, when a girl kept dobbing me in to the teacher for standing in the boys' line, I vowed in silence that one day the whole world would know I was a boy. I didn't know how I was going to do it or when, but it would happen. Little did I realise what a big fuss would be made over it all and to what extent the lives of Rachel and myself would nearly be ripped to shreds. But we came through it all, and what is more we came through it all stronger and richer and for the first time, and I have tasted a little of what it is like to be happy this past year and a half and have a generous measure of peace of mind.

My fighting days came to an end after I left school in 1988. I felt lost and planned a couple of ways of doing away with myself. Since my attempts to understand the Bible came to nought after so many years it seemed suicide was the only option left. I was too alone and in endless, indescribable emotional pain. Then, after many years of searching for the Creator so I could ask him to give me the right body to be happy and get on with life - two days before my planned suicide - I finally found a couple of people who could simply show me what the sacred writings were all about. Things were no longer hopeless and I didn't have to die to find peace. Of course all that knowledge didn't miraculously get me the body I needed but at least I found out that my and other peoples situations no matter how difficult or apparently insoluble are not permanent and that the world so full of precious plants, animals and some very special people wasn't and never will be blown to smithereens by madmen in their quest for power and world dominance as I had gloomily feared. So I no longer see the light at the end of the tunnel as a crushing oncoming train but a light of sure hope. Getting out of bed in the morning is still hard but at least I get out and get on with helping Rachel have some sort of life; no longer sinking into a hole of self-pity and despair.

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# The Road Less Travelled

## The Even Harder Road Taken by Those Who Turn Back

by J, D, N, & T.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: June 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



I realised I could not carry on.

**N**o, I'm not talking about the difficult road we all know so well, but the even harder way that is taken by those of us who choose to turn back, because they cannot

bear to hurt the ones they love and who love them. They sacrifice their own dream of happiness ... possibly jeopardise their very survival ... for the sake of that love. They take a harder and more admirable way. These thoughts of mine were inspired by a valedictory letter from an Internet list. With the writer's permission I reproduce it here:

*It was only then that I became fully aware, at an emotional rather than intellectual level, of the distress my wife was going through.*

This is surprisingly hard to write, and I've been putting it off for days.

I'm saying goodbye to all my transgender e-mail lists.

I had become convinced I was transsexual and had intended to start my transition as soon as was practical.

The rather sudden turning point from this path came at a visit to my counsellor with my wife. It was only then that I became fully aware, at an emotional rather than intellectual level, of the distress my wife was going through. Her pain was more out of concern for our children than for herself, but she was also anxious that the course I was on was unlikely to bring me happiness and fulfilment.

Before I slept that night, I realised I could not carry on. I felt I had more to lose than I had to gain. Having decided this, it has been surprisingly easy to let go of my wishes and to accept myself as a man again.

There is a lot of healing to be done in my relationship with my wife, and I expect this will take some time, and that things will never be quite the same as before. Happily the children were never aware of what was happening.

This leaves me with a few questions to ponder about my own identity.

Was I transsexual, or just on a mid-life escape trip? I'm not sure how worthwhile it would be to go into this.

I will be unsubscribing from this list in the next two or three days. I've been very grateful for the support I've had here. What I have been helped to realise is that we are all unique, and only we can ultimately decide what is right for ourselves.

I wish all of you the very best, whatever journey you are on.

With love, J.

And these are a few of the responses (also reprinted with permission)

*...I would like to wish you all the very best and hope that everything works out for you and your wife. The decision you have reached is very courageous and I applaud you for having the courage to look at yourself and your circumstances and making it... - "D"*

*That was a very difficult decision to come to. I do hope you and your wife can find a path to happiness and that things work out for you and your family... "N"*

*That was one of the bravest posts I've seen, you deserve great credit ... at the end of the day you have to be honest with yourself ... I hope you can rebuild your relationship with your wife and you both come out of this stronger ... "T"*

*You can keep your Pride Marches and Pride Balls. The love and determination in J's farewell letter and the supportive compassion in the responses are the qualities that make me proud to belong in this community ... Katherine Cummings*

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