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The Emotional Transition

The High Emotional Cost Paid for Having Undergone Gender Change

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There is undoubtedly a high emotional cost to be paid for having undergone or in the process of undergoing a change of one's gender. Much focus has been placed upon physical and psychological involvement and in recent times, this focus has been shifting toward a political consciousness.

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Yet rarely is there to be found information relating to the emotional aesthetics involved in this process. There is, of course, the acknowledgement of a standard period of hormonally induced emotional imbalance. This rarefication is possible due to the very individualistic nature of emotionalism. We each carry the scars, and alternatively, bear the fruit, of our personal emotional journey through this gender voyage.

There is a handful of published memoirs and thoughts of trannies past and present, yet relatively few of the ones I have had the good fortune to discover give any real insight into the emotional nature of our transition, if at all. Perhaps editors and publishers regard a rawness of honesty as a little uncomfortable and confrontational for their mainstream readers thus rendering the book as less saleable. Or maybe the writers themselves have dared not unleash a torrential flow of emotional reality. Is there perhaps an unacknowledged conspiracy within tranny circles to hide the emotional cost (and also its beauty) from each new generation so as not to frighten others from their path? Or is the truth too close to the bone for us all with the realisation that perhaps we took upon ourselves something bigger and more problematic than we originally expected. Certainly, I have come to question my readiness to change gender. Had I initially been presented with a detailed account of the many emotional and psychological transitions that would befall me, I may well have changed my mind and never given gender reassignment a second thought.

And what of this emotional cost? Naturally, I can only speak from a personal perspective as each has their own story. And of course, for each who has fallen prey to emotional quicksand, there is a myriad of other experiences of a more uplifting nature. I am of the opinion, however, that none of the seemingly negative emotional responses are indeed negative as all serve to shape and refine our spiritual selves. Yet, I have noted a thread of insecurity and fear amongst the tranny men I have maintained contact with and these are to be found within myself also. I can only assume that my female counterparts experience something similar.

There is an external inhibition placed upon the display of emotional drowning that has affected my process and that, of course, is the influence of the medical profession. Certainly I was not about to reveal any inability to deal with my gender process to either my endocrinologist or psychiatrist. There is hanging over our heads the perpetual fear of being denied access to the physical sculpturing of our bodies. So to discuss my emotional imbalance or fear could cut off the life blood of hormone injections and sabotage any future surgical experience. I learned quickly to place a veneer of strength and balance before me. My pride fortified this outer shell by refusing to allow even my friends the knowledge that I was perpetually overwhelmed by the vastness of my undertaking. I did not, and still to a degree do not, have sufficient coping mechanisms to deal with this gender process as a whole. I can only allow myself glimpses of the complete restructuring of my life. To take in simultaneously the entire consequences of changing gender is beyond my emotional or psychological capacity.

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So each day, I go about my business placing to the rear of my conscious mind any fear or vulnerability, pretending everything is okay and that being a transgenderist is no more mind boggling than being born gay. But it is. Gender permeates nearly every face of our society. Several other tranny men have confirmed this self-protective process of selective thinking. Few of us want to confront ourselves with the enormity of this gender lesson. There are others who have denied any emotional difficulty, confident in the apparent ease of their transition. A very large part of me wants to believe that they still have their blinkers on as I'm not convinced there hasn't been some sort of emotional fall-out for these people.

There are also many trannies who choose to minimise any focus upon emotional sensitivity so as to counteract the already quite negative medical and social view of transgenderists that we each are confronted with in our daily lives. This is both necessary and important. Tranny consciousness is coming to the fore and it's paramount to release the stigma from our process. However, in doing so, we perhaps yet again run the risk of inhibiting our emotional responses and our own release. In order to appear as functional, coping individuals we push down further our fears and insecurities.

Of course, there is the enormous relief and elation that comes with finally becoming the gender you perceive yourself to be. There is an almost indescribable joy to be experienced when the world acknowledges you as the man or woman you are. The delight gained at each new change of your body, each time someone addresses you by your chosen name and the validation of being mirrored by the world at large. And so it is that we can focus upon the joy. Yet perhaps again, we allow this to eclipse the emotional self that is dragging its feet behind and needs a little push to catch up.

What perhaps is needed within our community is a facility that encourages we trannies to express our emotions without fear of prejudice, of reinforcing a social and medical stereotype, or of being a failure. A place to unleash the tide of pent-up grief, confusion, fear and insight. Somewhere to analyse and release, grow yet be vulnerable. An environment in which to unsheathe the daily strain of appearing "together", unafraid and invulnerable to the world. To have someone say it's okay to be a mess - anyone would be if given our life challenge. We trannies must be stronger than most other people, more defensive than most and unfortunately are made more accountable.

Ultimately, we can change our attitude toward each other. We can allow each other to be scared and disturbed. We can be able to heal each other through empathy and patience. We judge each other too harshly as indeed we judge ourselves. If we're too afraid to bare our soul to a fellow transgenderist for fear of:

- a. being seen as a failure;
- b. reinforcing a stereotype;
- c. being judged;
- d. being found as too confronting; or
- e. being gossiped about, then who can we talk to ?

Where is the real sense of "community"? We are slowly coming together in order to change law that governs our lives but what about coming together in order to heal, listen and celebrate? There are too many of us as fragments of a whole, who seek out counselling from non-trannies (not denying the usefulness of this), who each as alone cry out for help and role models. Where are our elders who can share of their experience? Do we have a responsibility to each other or do we merely "disappear" into our respective lifestyles just wanting to be seen as the boy or girl next door?

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