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# A Father Writes, a Mother Writes

## Two Different Experiences

by Pat & Lisa Blackwood

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Then one day, ten years ago, this beloved child called to tell us (her Mom and I) that she was going to become a man.

### A Father Writes

**M**y son transitioned about ten years ago. My older daughter was closer to me than the younger daughter was. That's because she liked to do many of the things I liked to do. We worked shoulder to shoulder in my workshop. She was an equally skilled opponent for backgammon. We enjoyed intellectual debates. She was, however, a most unhappy child. We didn't know why, nor did she, nor did mental health people we consulted with. She wondered if maybe she was gay, but she didn't feel gay. None of us knew zip about trans-anything. Then my beloved daughter went off to college, got married, got divorced, was still unhappy, but okay. She enjoyed the company of gay people; was comfortable with them, but didn't want to be gay.

*My son had all of my daughter's best qualities, but none of the old unhappiness. My son was a delightful young man.*

Then one day, ten years ago, this beloved child called to tell us (her Mom and I) that she was going to become a man. That made no sense at all. Maybe she was just gay. Surely this would pass and we could all move on as before. Our kid had learned about trans-everything, but we had not, yet. Still we loved this child and told her (yeah, the pronouns) that we would always love her, but that it would take some time for us to adjust to whatever the hell was going on. That simple phrase set off a tirade in our child, who equated a lack of instant acceptance with complete rejection. We think, to this day, that massive doses of testosterone were a factor there.

During the next year or so, we could never chat for long without breaking down in tirades, but we never closed the door on our child and he never closed the door on us. For my part, I felt this horrible new son being forced on me was killing or had killed my beloved daughter, who I knew I would never see again.

We did maintain tenuous contact with my 'evil' son and I finally got to know him enough to realise that my beloved daughter had not gone away. My son had all of my daughter's best qualities, but none of the old unhappiness. My son was a delightful young man.

My son is indeed in a gay relationship. His life partner is another F.T.M. They are a delightful couple.

That gets us through the first two years of transition. The next eight have been just kind of normal. I have two wonderful kids again. My son still enjoys doing guy stuff. That works pretty well.

My wife and I benefited from my younger daughter's drug addiction. We were in a couple of support programs for parents of addicts when my son dropped his bomb on us. We had a few good tools for coping. Still, it took a couple of years to get through the bad times. I had to let my son go before we could rebuild a relationship. We did. It's great.

Take care and be well, Pat.

The following is an article submitted by Lisa Blackwood and describes the relationship between a male-to-female pre-op transsexual and her children. An effort has been made through this article to help others understand the issues a transsexual parent sometimes goes through.

### A Mother Writes

**H**oney, You've got to tell the kids.

Frequently, I'm asked the question, "how have your children adjusted to your transsexuality?" Or, "I don't know how to tell my children."

Along with a conversation verbatim between myself and my eight-year-old son Tom, I have a few suggestions that may be useful to transsexual parents when faced with integrating their family into their new lives.

Principally, don't leave telling your children until another day. You may fear the worst but that isn't necessarily the case.

I hope the following conversation with Tom might help you open up to your children.

Conversation between Lisa (forty-one-year-old M.T.F. transsexual, Tom (eight-year-old son), and Elliott (six-year-old son)

**Lisa:** What age were you when I told you I wanted to be a woman?

**Tom:** When I was six and Elliott was four.

**Lisa:** How did I tell you?

**Tom:** You said, "I like to dress as a woman and if I live the rest of my life like that, is that okay with you?"

**Lisa:** What did you say?

**Tom:** I was a bit shocked, but not worried.

**Lisa:** What's the best way a parent should tell their kids?

**Tom:** Say, "I'd like to live the rest of my life as a woman, and would that be okay?"

**Lisa:** What is the best age to tell your kids? Younger or older?

**Tom:** Around four to six. I would feel cheated if I was told when I was older.

**Lisa:** Do you think parents should keep it a secret, or tell their kids as soon as possible?

**Tom:** Tell as soon as possible.

**Lisa:** Are you afraid your friends will find out?

**Tom:** No.

**Lisa:** How have you adjusted to my new name, as Lisa?

**Tom:** Good. Well, I'll get used to it.

**Lisa:** Do I treat you the same now I live as a woman as I did before?

**Tom:** The same.

Tom states the obvious.

Tell the kids, and tell them young.

They will benefit and so will you. Your life will go through tremendous mental and physical changes. The last thing you need is to lose your offspring.

The general public don't seem to realise that for a M.T.F. transsexual, to lose her children in a marriage separation or any other circumstances is devastating. A true transsexual has all the natural bonding and emotional feelings as does a natural female mother. Your children are your most precious possessions, and should only be let go if every attempt has been made to secure them.

Tell your children young, before society has stamped a cultural imprint in their minds about the norms and values of society.

Your children trust you more than anyone else in the whole world. They love you and you love them. A simple change of gender won't impede on that bond. Like everyone, the children will adjust to their environment, and their dad becoming their mom won't seem out of place to them, as it might for others.

As you adapt to your change and the 'big day' of when you tell them, introduce little talks or discussions, like "I can't believe how cheap women's clothes are on that ad". Or, "gosh, if I wore women's clothes, we would have more money to buy toys". And "who says women are allowed to wear jeans? They're boy's clothes, aren't they?" "How come some women drive trucks and some men stay home and look after the children?"

Gender blending is a good way to introduce the subject.

Tell them you've always wanted to be a girl, and so have lots of others you have talked to. Tell them how much this means to you. Strike a deal with your kids. Say, "if I live as a woman, I'll just look different, that's all".

The things kids fear the most, is the loss of their parent.

Their consistency, support and love is paramount. If you change into someone they can't identify with then you're going to have trouble.

But looking different these days is nothing new to a kid. Finally, all this takes time and understanding. Be prepared when the kids call you 'Dad' in the video shop or the supermarket queue.

They will still want you to kick the footy with them - they are boys. All these tasks are still necessary when you get that big cuddle at the end of the day.

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