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Observations

Ramblings of a Scared Middle-Aged Transsexual

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I called this article observations, but maybe it would be more accurate to call it Ramblings of a Scared Middle Aged Transsexual.

I have a transsexual friend (she calls me a prude), she's probably right. I've met a couple of other transgenders and probably a few more I thought were ordinary men or women. I'm no expert on changing gender and the following isn't advice, just my feelings. I've read articles by female-to-Male transgenders and I find myself completely at sea. I write this article as a male-to-female so if you are the other way around just transpose a few words.

I know how a "normal" person feels when I think about a female-to-male intellectually but emotionally I don't. I have spent a lifetime wishing and praying that I would go to sleep and wake up as a woman. How in heavens name can you want to change "into a man? It's costing me a fortune to get rid of my facial hair and you want to grow them. All the rest has been an emotional and

financial hell and you want to be and have what I hate. As I said I know how a "normal" person feels about me. As far as the bigot goes I never will understand.

I said I was scared, I have a month to go for my reassignment operation and my psychiatrist (who took three weeks to get off his rear end and send my last referral) who has only my wellbeing on his mind, kept me waiting and wondering if he was going to send it. It knocked my psychic reserves to hell. One month to go for an operation that's costing us \$14,300 including legal fees and my spouse's accommodation and food.

I'm full of fearful questions, the main ones being; will it look right? And, will it work? There are about a hundred more. My local psychiatrist is pragmatic about it, saying; "It's the only game in town". He's right! To get any better you would have to go back to the moment of conception and change which spermatozoa got to the egg. But then I wouldn't be me. An imperfect man, an imperfect woman. Psychiatrists! Aahhh!

Barbara Rose wrote in edition four of *Polare*, "is it close enough?" (do we all feel like this or is it only me) I have a feeling we forget just how miserable we were before. I have someone who keeps reminding me.

I read with interest the article written by Max, in edition four of *Polare*, about his teenage child. It is a very difficult problem for all concerned. I have three children aged six, eleven and fourteen. The two eldest are girls. I was lucky in that when I decided to change, I discussed it with Tracy (my eldest) when she was twelve. I had and have the total support of my wife Denise (being in love and having it returned is my greatest strength). This may have helped Tracy to be more accepting. I had to have her support first before going ahead. That is one of the responsibilities you take on when you have children so they must be given consideration. After all, there is just as much effect on them and their future.

Although I agree to some extent with Max, I don't agree with the idea of death of the parent at all. Ask my children and you will find that I look different, I'm not as cranky and I'm a little softer in my attitudes.

That's about it "I" am still me! No one died.

Total honesty is of the utmost importance. If you lie, be evasive or show the slightest amount of shame in the change, you are in real trouble as the child will feel it. One big advantage we have with our children is trust and love. Betray it and you're done for. If you have split up or divorced, talk with your ex and ask them to tell only the truth. That is the one thing you both owe your children.

We live in the country. There is no counselling service, no help, nowhere you can get advice, you're on your own. When I went on hormones, I went to the schools of my children. First off I saw the girls' adviser at the high school. I told her what I was doing and asked her to keep an eye on Tracy and give her a shoulder to cry on. Two months later I again visited the girls' adviser as Tracy seemed to be having trouble. Was it me? No, it turned out that me changing wasn't causing problems but her grandmother (my mother) had disowned

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me and my family and Tracy especially (she was supporting my choice).

When she went over to visit her grandmother she was treated very badly. At that time she was only twelve. I have found some so called adults who haven't got the intestinal fortitude to express their prejudice to me or my spouse, but say cruel things to my children.

I again visited the girls' adviser just prior to my coming-out and gave her as much information about what was happening and about transsexualism: as I could. I also went to see the school counsellor for our primary school and gave the same information and I also answered any of their questions as openly as possible. I requested that Jonathon and Christina's teachers keep an eye on them and my children were also given the time to talk with their friends and tell them about me. I feel that the trouble I went to and the embarrassment I went through paid off. All my children have adjusted well and have no problems at school. Their friends just have a lot of questions.

As I type this article I can hear seventeen young teenagers, it's Tracy's fourteenth birthday. Five of her friends weren't allowed to come but the rest were, I know! Before the kids were allowed in our yard their parents had to phone and give their permission. It proves I've done something right.

On the home front I tried to continue to be a father and be called "Dad", but Jonathon (my youngest) was getting very confused with having a Dad that looked like a Mum. So a family meeting took place and it was decided to call me Mum. Now there's Mum and Mummy or two mums, Mum one and Mum two, or "Not you the other one". A problem solved, their friends at school are the confused ones now.

A few months after I went full-time I placed advertisements in the local and area papers telling people that I had changed my name and intended to live as a woman. Running a business for fifteen years in the same town does get you known. It was very hard on Denise. Someone would ring up and ask for Robert; "Sorry ... umm ... he, she's Rachel now" It was very confusing! Again things haven't been exactly perfect but coming-out and telling everyone has reduced some of the confusion and prejudice. Time will tell.

I look back at my decision to live as a woman and ask was it worth it. I am gradually gaining an inner peace that I never had. The internal pain has stopped. I am not miserable and cranky anymore. I'm not joyous but closer than I've ever been to happy. Financially I am worse off. I risked losing my wife and children but didn't. My closer acquaintances and friends have stuck by to varying degrees. My mother and father told me not to contact them again, that was after I wouldn't kill myself. My eldest nephew who I helped raise from birth, now twenty-two years old, won't have anything to do with me. He is the one doing psychology at university. The younger nephew of nineteen years who was working for me, up and left on being told. My elder sister (the one who told everybody I was a little sissy when in primary school and had to be looked after all the time because I acted like a girl) disowned me and used the foulest language to my spouse and claimed she was a witch and had turned my mind. My brother who tried to get me exorcised and cause trouble for my children with the Department of Social Services disowned me, a "Born Again" Christian.

Yes it was worth it, I've gained more than I've lost, especially the new friendships. I think and hope that the problems we all face can be solved or made less painful, but it's up to each one of us individually and as a group. I've spent a lot of time crying on Susan's shoulder. "Thanks Susan".

We are the different ones, not the people around us. Making the decision to live in the other gender role I doubt was easy for any of us. So don't expect too much from the people around us including family and friends. Given room and time they come to be accepting. Don't expect anyone except another transsexual to understand. "They can't".

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