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The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

But Mostly the Good

Kevin's Former Partner

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



[Transition] enables the person you love to be truly happy ...

A former partner of our cover [F.T.M.](#), Kevin, is interviewed on the topic of F.T.M. transition. At the time of the interview the relationship was ongoing.

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Kevin's Former Partner: Kevin and I met five-and-a-half years ago, and spent four years as a lesbian couple, complete with commitment ceremony. After the ceremony, Kevin told me he wanted to transition. And thus began the journey that led me here.

Polare Magazine: Okay, let's start with some romance. How did you and Kevin meet? Was it love at first sight? Fireworks going off, etc?

Kevin's Former Partner: We met at work. Kev was the spunky new kitchen hand, and I was the café manager. He said he was only in Sydney for a short stay. He spent a lot of time convincing me that he wasn't interested in a relationship, that he was focussed on joining the Navy, and then he asked me out. We went and saw *Titanic*, played some pool, and went home together. I was his first attempt at a one-night stand! We clicked straight away, and we've been inseparable ever since.

Polare Magazine: How long have you been together? Did the relationship pre-date Kevin's transition or was it the other way around?

Kevin's Former Partner: Five-and-a-half years. For our third anniversary we got matching tattoos, for our fourth, we got married, and for our fifth, we spray-painted our initials in Camperdown Park! Kev started transitioning over a year ago. Maybe for our sixth anniversary we could get legally married.

Polare Magazine: How did you become aware of Kevin's desire to transition and what were your feelings initially about his plans?

Kevin's Former Partner: Kev saw the book of photos by Loren Cameron at a friend's house, and he recognised the bodies in it as how he saw himself, and what he wanted to look like. When he told me I was pretty upset. He said that it was just about changing his body, but I knew the implications would be much broader than that, and I didn't want to block his journey by putting limits on what I could or could not cope with. In other words I completely freaked out! I didn't know how I was going to handle being with a man, as I had turned my back on the world of men some years ago. I was very upset, but I also wanted to be supportive, and stay together if we could.

Polare Magazine: Has your attitude evolved at all since you were first introduced to the concepts of transsexuality (or transgenderism?) and transition? How?

Kevin's Former Partner: I've never had any opinion on transitioning as such. I'm fairly open-minded, and I think people should be able to do whatever they want as long as they're not hurting others. My opinion as to how it affected me has changed. I wanted Kev to stick to the queer side of things, but I found that holding onto the small ways in which Kev is not like a man was destructive, as I was too invested in his journey and how he felt about himself, and it led to a lot of arguments and unhappiness. I guess you could say my attitude has changed from brute panic to a great deal of acceptance.

Polare Magazine: Did you have any concerns for Kevin, for yourself or for the relationship before transition started? And if you did have concerns, what were they?

Kevin's Former Partner: My concerns were that our relationship was going to fall apart. In particular I felt that if I didn't come to an accommodation with transition, that I would be the one leaving, and that I would be the unsupportive cause of our break-up. Intellectually I felt that I didn't have the right to have any objections, but emotionally I was objecting all over the place! I was also concerned about the health issues that come with transitioning, and the costs. I was worried that there would be periods of unemployment, and that the surgeries would be expensive.

Polare Magazine: What was transition like from your perspective? Would you say transition is complete now? How long a process was it or has it been? What were some of the highs & lows? Scary bits, exciting bits, funny bits?

Kevin's Former Partner: Transition is still not over. Most of the hormonal and emotional changes seem to have stabilised now, so it's getting a bit easier. I was upset recently because I'd set a year in my mind as the time it would take for our relationship to return to "normal" and it still hasn't (will it ever be the same?), but we talked honestly about that and I feel better about us now. I wouldn't call much of the last year a "high". It has been good to see Kevin feel better about himself, he's much less depressed than he used to be, but he has also been periodically stressed about transitioning issues, so one balances out the other most of the time. The low was when we broke up for twenty-four hours! I moved all my clothes over to a friend's house, only to bring it all straight back home. That was a good thing for us though I think, because it was so awful to break up it gave us more motivation to make it work out. The most fun bit of transitioning for me is that I get to give the needles! There's nothing like sticking a needle in someone's butt to rid you of any lingering resentment!

Polare Magazine: What have been some of the notable responses from those close to you regarding Kevin's transsexual or transgender background and/or transition? If there have been any difficult situations, how have you handled them? What about support services, counsellors etc., have you felt supported?

Kevin's Former Partner: All of our friends have been really supportive of us both, and helped me through some of the darker moments. My mother doesn't understand, but it doesn't bother her either. My dad has added it to the list of reasons why Kevin is not a suitable partner for me (but that list was long and stupid way before transition). The hardest times have been for Kev at work (more in stressful anticipation than an actual horrible experience, everyone there has been really understanding), and he has had to do that alone, although I try to be supportive from home. We went to a counsellor at the Gender Centre, but she was very negative, advising me that we wouldn't make it. Apparently that can be a common problem in relationship counselling, so I'm trying not to be bitter, but it was the last thing I wanted to hear when I was already really upset. I think you need to talk to the counsellor you are thinking of seeing, before you start, about what you want out of counselling, and what your goals are.

Polare Magazine: Has transition changed Kevin in any way?

Kevin's Former Partner: Depression is less. Kevin has joined the gym, stopped smoking, become more active. Anger - Anger went off the Richter scale early on, which I think was the low testosterone dose they make you start on, because it largely disappeared after his dose went up. Now his anger is normal, and no greater than my level of day-to-day snappiness. Libido - High and higher still! This probably causes the most arguments between us, although I'm starting to appreciate the benefits of having lots and lots of sex. Emotions - I think he is connected to his emotions differently now. There used to be a lot of stuff we just instinctively knew about each other, but now we have to talk a lot more.

Polare Magazine: How has Kevin's experience of transsexuality or transgenderism affected you? What challenges has it brought to your relationship and to you personally? Has this aspect of your relationship affected you as a couple and/or you as an individual in positive ways? Has it taught you new things about Kevin?

Kevin's Former Partner: One of my friends described this journey as being an amazing opportunity for self-growth. At the time, I wanted to kill her, because I had had enough growth, I just wanted to go back to how my life used to be! But it has been good for my soul. I've had to change a lot of the ways I thought about myself, and become even more immune to how others see me. Our relationship is still really strong, which I am very proud of and amazed by. Now I feel like we can get through any obstacle that life can throw at us. I have also learnt not to underestimate my partner's ability to grow as a person. He constantly surprises me with his level of insight and love.

Polare Magazine: Has being in this relationship taught you anything about yourself? Did it cause you to question your own identity at any time and if so what conclusions have you drawn from it all?

Kevin's Former Partner: My identity is in a complete mess! I now say that I identify as nothing, not that I think of myself as nothing, but I do feel like a chameleon, and in a group of one. I never felt like I fit in when I was growing up, and I guess I still feel like that. I'm not straight; in that straight to me has connotations that I disagree with, as a feminist, and personally. I felt cast-out from that world, and I'm not sure how that all sits with me now. I greatly enjoyed being a lesbian, because it gave focus and voice to my sense of difference, but I don't feel like I belong there either anymore. Also, lesbianism and straightness depend for their definition on there being only two genders, and that doesn't make sense to me anymore. It's like being with Alice in Wonderland - once you walk through the gender looking glass, nothing ever looks the same again (that is not necessarily a bad thing, it can be quite liberating, but it does put you outside what the rest of the world understands about gender). I'm not sure I want to broadcast the nature of my relationship now in the way that I did when I was gay. Gay is quite socially acceptable now, but trans stuff gets a Jerry Springer type reaction from a lot of people, and I find that exhausting. So there you go, one confused chameleon.

Polare Magazine: This is a leading question, but would you say transition can be an egocentric time for one's partner? Have you felt at any stage that your needs and concerns (not just in relation to transsexuality or transgenderism) have been overlooked or overshadowed by what's been going on for Kevin?

Kevin's Former Partner: I like this question! Are you trying to tell me something about your own experience? I do think trans stuff takes a very large amount of mental space, and that's just how it is. Kev did listen as I cried and yelled, but how could he respond when the thing that is making me unhappy is the process that is leading him to inner-peace? I lost a lot of weight, and I was quite miserable, but as the testosterone cloud has lifted, balance has been restored to our relationship. I never felt like Kev didn't care, only that he didn't have the capacity to worry about me as well as his own stuff. If anything, I think Kev spent that time fearing that I might leave him, and worried that he couldn't make it any easier for me.

Polare Magazine: What have you learned about transsexuality or transgenderism, that you would like the average person to understand?

Kevin's Former Partner: I think it is safest and easiest for the average person to understand transitioning in the transsexual sense, as that is its least threatening and the most palatable form. Birth defects that are correctable are quite acceptable to most people. Personally, I don't think that transsexuality or transgenderism is that simple, and for a lot of men, the journey is very complicated and doesn't finish in the same place. But I don't think the world is quite ready for non-binary gender.

Polare Magazine: What do you love about Kev?

Kevin's Former Partner: He's a wonderful, funny, smart, cute and sexy guy! I wouldn't be with anyone else!

Polare Magazine: What is your life together like? An average week?

Kevin's Former Partner: I go to uni and work during the week, and Kev works at the post office. Every night we come home, Kev goes to the gym, we walk the dog, do the shopping, cook dinner, watch telly, hang out. On the weekends we clean the house and see our friends. It's pretty relaxed, until it gets to exam time, of course!

Polare Magazine: What are your plans, hopes and dreams for the future?

Kevin's Former Partner: I want to go overseas to work when I finish my degree, as there's more work overseas than in Australia. Kev is keen on the idea, but we also want to fit in a uni degree for him, so the timing could be a little tricky. We want to travel, own a house, and stay together for a very long time!

Polare Magazine: Is there anything else you'd like to say to partners, parents, family or friends?

Kevin's Former Partner: Transition is ultimately a positive experience. It enables the person you love to be truly happy, (or at least happier than they were!). In the end, they will seem more like themselves than ever before.

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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