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## Late Transition Leads to a Happier Life

by Konnor T. Crewe

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**M**y name is Konnor T. Crewe. I am female to male trans. I began social transition in 2006 when I was forty-three and hormonal transition in 2010 when I was forty-six years old. I started realising I felt like a man when I was fourteen years old, before I had the vocabulary to even describe my feelings. I repressed those feelings for a long time. It wasn't until around 1995 that I started beginning to get the basic vocabulary of transgender identity. Before that, I'd never even heard of transgender.

*However, because of the transphobic and homophobic messages we are given when we are children, many of us end up feeling ashamed or conflicted for being who we are.*

I choose queer as my sexual orientation because I don't feel that other choices really adequately define my sexuality. The story about my orientation is a whole other can of worms, and I won't go into that right at the moment. Suffice to say that my orientation has been fairly fluid during my lifetime. Addressing the question posed on Quora.com when I originally wrote this, the reasoning that people are not considered transsexual (I am going to use the preferable, politically correct term trans or transgender here, because many transgender people perceive the word transsexual as being negative and clinical) if they do not have all the surgery is false. People can transition hormonally or non-hormonally. Some female to male trans people transition by naturally raising the level of testosterone in their body without injections. Some people transition socially but choose to never have surgery. Some people decide not to transition even though they are trans. A high percentage of female-to-male people have top surgery, but never opt for bottom surgery. Some people who are gender-queer or bi-gender choose to transition and fit within the trans definition. What defines someone as trans is not whether they have surgery. It is whether they have gender dysphoria to the degree where they feel at odds with the sex assigned at birth. It would not matter where on the gender spectrum I place myself, or what degree of dysphoria have, if I perceive myself as transgender. then I am transgender.

The interesting thing to note is that many transgender people who suffered from depression all their life find that their depression goes away when they transition. So even though being trans is pathologised and made to sound very clinical, we are not sick because we are trans. We are not mentally ill the way closed-minded people imagine us. We become depressed because we are not able to express our gender freely or safely. We become anxious when people bully us or threaten us.

Our safety in openly expressing our gender is very complex. We could have personal safety issues based on past trauma. We could face threats from the gay and lesbian community. We could fear violence from people who are homophobic or transphobic.

We could even fear violence from our own family or loved ones, or other transgender people when we transition. Or maybe we have safety concerns because we might lose our job or expose our children to problems when we come out. However, when we transition, we usually lead happy lives.

I went from being severely depressed most of the time to being fleetingly sad once in a while. I still suffer from anxiety issues, but my quality of life has improved dramatically as a result of transition. So to answer the question which was originally on Quora.com more directly, it feels really good to transition from female to male after years of not feeling like I could truly be myself. Finally I feel as if I've come into my own. I feel happy even though I have to deal with ignorance on a day-to-day basis. I feel happy even though my father, my stepmother and my son rarely talk to me.

There is the key reason my life has changed. I feel happy because I'm able to be true to myself. Authenticity is the biggest key to happiness for me. And though I've made sacrifices, my happiness was the most important part of my progress in life. I went from living a half-life to living wholly as myself. The sacrifices were painful, but before I can love anyone else around me, I have to love myself. I am now not in a constant state of suicidal depression. It was a selfish choice to choose my happiness, but without that selfish choice, I probably would not be here.

I believe that it is different when one transitions later in life. Many of us over thirty or forty years old did not have the same freedom and information about transitioning as the teen and twenty-something trans people who are transitioning today. We may also have had more transphobia in our upbringing and family because fewer people had access to information about trans people thirty or forty years ago. The internet has improved visibility for transgender people, as well as our ability to network with people who are trans and get support. The internet has also changed the way the public sees transgender people.

People who transition older have different priorities. We may regret not transitioning earlier. We may feel the loss of our ability to go through a trans adolescence. When I started taking testosterone I felt some of the symptoms of puberty, but because of being older, I really did not feel like exploring sexually or hanging out in the bar scene. Basically I'm just too old for that nonsense. My goals in life are more related to security and settling down than social exploration. However I lost out on a lot of the milestones that someone who was able to come out at an early age would be able to experience. And there is a sense of feeling foolish for feeling like a teenager when I'm forty-eight years old.

Another problem of transitioning late is that our health issues may complicate our ability to medically transition. Testosterone has, as a side effect, the ability to make a person more prone to conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol issues. If someone has added health issues, like being overweight or smoking, it makes transitioning more of a challenge and more dangerous to the health.

Also, transitioning later in life, we may not have enough time to have all our surgeries unlike the younger folks. Being older, it may feel as if time and more health issues may cause us to put our health procedures, including surgeries, in order of priority. If we have a disability, or more complicated health issues, then transition may take a back seat to the other issues. Those transitioning older may also find it very difficult to find like-minded older guys for support. If you are an older trans man, see the links below:

In my journey I even went as far as to move to another State, Massachusetts, where I knew there were more trans people and where there was better health care geared towards the trans community. I also chose Massachusetts because we have universal health care as well as a high value placed on education and open-mindedness. And Massachusetts has better legal support and advocacy for trans people as well as having same-sex marriage. I choose to live in a State that supports my rights.

Some people asked these questions would choose to answer anonymously. I guess the idea of anonymity raises certain emotional reactions in me. So many of us live in shame and secrecy before coming out as transgender. Shame is damaging to the psyche. And there is really no need for transgender people to feel ashamed of who they are.

However, because of the transphobic and homophobic messages we are given when we are children, many of us end up feeling ashamed or conflicted for being who we are.

I believe that many of us have a very strong wish to live authentically which we deny because of society's judgements. I also believe that sometimes transphobia or fear of trans people causes those who view trans people to think of them as being somehow fraudulent in how they present themselves and that we are somehow trying to pull the wool over societies' eyes. I'm not suggesting the author of the question has this view, but I want to take the opportunity to dispel this myth.

As a trans person, I only want to live true to myself as the person I am without the need to hide for fear of personal safety or without the wish to hide for fear that people will read me as trans and endanger my safety by outing me. The reasons that people live stealthily are many, but I think the primary reason is to protect their personal safety, their ability to make a living without being outed and having their welfare endangered, etc. And maybe for some, it is just that they want recognition as a real man without prejudice based on our history. Not one of those reasons is because they want to trick people or fool people about who they are.

The transgender panic defense is an ignorant sort of strategy by those who commit violence against transgender people which is based on some mythological idea that we are fraudulent and out to trick them or humiliate them. Most of the time, that we have not outed ourselves or we choose not to out ourselves is because we cannot do so safely or we cannot do so without losing our family members and our support network. And again, one of the most important self-actualization goals that most transgender people that I know have as a priority in their life is the ability to be authentic. It does not matter if they are doing so quietly in stealth or out in the open. It is important for us to be true to ourselves. We do not live a life based on shame. We seek a life free from those who would attempt shame or hurt us for being who we are.

Many people die for being trans. Take a look at the Transgender Day of Remembrance website and take a look at the number of people murdered for being who they are. Although the website hasn't been updated for a while, you can see that there is a terrible toll of people murdered for being transgender. And these people on the website are only the ones reported in the media. There are probably many more people who are murdered for being trans who were not reported.

Many of us in the trans community know someone personally who was a victim of murder or violence or were ourselves the victim of violence. It takes great courage to come out as trans due to the degradation and hatred that we face from people who see us as unworthy of respect. Trans hate crimes happen when people see the victim as less than human and therefore think that no one will care if they commit a crime against us. However we are people and are deserving of the same respect and dignity as any other human being. And yet many of us still persist in the face of hate and violence because of our great need to be true to who we are as people.

Surgeries do not make a trans person complete, although for some of us it can give us self-esteem, take away dysphoria and depression and make us feel more whole and right in our bodies. In my case, I have had a hysterectomy but not top surgery. My insurance paid for the hysterectomy and oophorectomy because I had painful fibroids.

Having a hysterectomy and oophorectomy is usually inevitable when you take testosterone, because long-term usage of testosterone can cause uterine prolapse. And having the ovaries removed or oophorectomy makes it possible to take less testosterone with the same effect.

Having a hysterectomy and oophorectomy was a positive health decision for me. Decisions regarding hysterectomy and oophorectomy may be based on life stage. Those under forty may think about fertility options and egg storage where people of my stage of life may find that to be less of an issue.

I also want to say that because of lack of sensitive medical care, lots of trans men do not receive proper gynecological care and can sometimes end up with more serious health issues, sometimes from avoiding doctors who are less than respectful. It's not because we want to neglect our health issues, but because we cannot find enough doctors who are competent in communicating with transgender patients in a sensitive way, conducting exams in a sensitive way and treating us with respect. Psychologically speaking, I felt a great sense of relief after the hysterectomy and oophorectomy procedure. I'm actually not sure whether it was being on testosterone for two years which gave me a sense of balance and took away my depression, or if it was having the hysterectomy and oophorectomy. Perhaps it was a combination of the two that balanced my body's hormonal system and reduced my depression dramatically. I suspect I will feel the same sense of psychological and physiological relief if I ever am able to afford to have top surgery (a mastectomy procedure very specifically geared to create a male chest), as well.

## Update 7/12/2014

It is a very strange feeling having delayed adulthood until after fifty years old, but that is how I feel. I feel like I am only just starting, to realise my full potential after waiting over forty years of my life to start my adolescence and start coming into my adulthood. In 2010 when I started taking testosterone, I experienced a second adolescence. In fact, I finally experienced adolescence which I had waited for most of my life. It feels really bizarre being an adolescent in a forty-six-year-old body, but that is what people who transition late experience. It was embarrassing to me at times as well as producing a feeling of grief at having missed out on so much.

Now, I'm finally beginning to assess my core values, who I am as a man, and who I want to be. It is very painful to me that I lost out on a good part of my adulthood. Most people my age have had houses and families I'm now over fifty and my chance at those kinds of things is far less likely, especially with the added complication of my disabilities.

However, I have a big vision and I believe in myself. Maybe I will have a house some day. Maybe I will have top surgery. Maybe I'll be able to support my disabled partner the way he deserves.

I believe that I have a lot of intelligence and skills in spite of my transgender status and my disability. I want very much to succeed.

I want to have a legacy.

And I want to have self-respect. My wish is to help the transgender community not in a small way, but in a very large way.

## Older F.T.M. Trans Support:

[Trans Men Over 40 Discussion Group on Facebook](#) 

[It's a Man's World YouTube Channel](#) 

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