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180 Degree Turnaround

Gail Makes the Right Decision

by Gail

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The first week of January 1992 was a very traumatic week for me. My partner told me that she couldn't stand me any longer and that our marriage was over. That afternoon I decided that life had ceased to have any meaning and went down to my garage to commit suicide. As I was about to open the garage door, I heard the little children who lived behind me, playing in their backyard - laughing, screaming and making eight-year-old noises. At that moment I realised what a very selfish, horrible thing I was about to do to my own children (aged eleven and nineteen) and went back up to the house to think about the situation again. My decision then was to turn my life around 180° and see what would happen.

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As a result, for the first time in my life, I learned what liking one's self was like. My children even opted to live with me instead of their mother (it was up to them to decide).

I work in the University system teaching students workshop practice, using wood, metal, welding etc. (I'm a toolmaker by trade) and I've received so much support from the people whom I work with, I now wonder why I waited so long to come to terms with my own feelings.

The beautiful thing is that I haven't lost any real friends. I've been a member of a car club for years (I love Plymouths!) and still go to meetings and rallies. My friends invite me to their homes for the normal suburban parties and barbecues as my new persona with no 'warnings' to their other friends, so I am accepted as who I am by all and sundry.

My learning curve has been vertical - how to dress, what to dress in! I'm now fifty-four years old but my dress sense can vary from that of a nineteen-year-old to a forty-year-old in one week. I've never dressed as a fifty-year-old yet. Girlfriends, friends wives, neighbours and students whom I work with have helped me with things like make-up, voice (it is deep) and walking. I find that I have lost my aggressive, angry attitude to life that was always present in the past, and I am told by an N.R.M.A. road service man that I can only be picked because I know too much about my 1968 American car!

The one thing that I've never done is hide the truth about myself. If someone is being suspicious, I'll just say "by the way, I'm a transgendered person" and keep talking as though it is the most natural thing in the world. Most people only take five minutes to acclimatize to the situation and everything is okay. By the way, living in the heart of Sydney's north shore can be stressful at times - especially as I still shop at the same large complex I have been going to for the last twenty-eight years.

Being a single parent means that my social life is on weekends only, and as most of the Gender Centre's social activities are weekdays and evenings, it is very difficult. If some things were held on weekends it would help.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

related articles

EXPRESSING MY FEMININE SIDE BELINDA'S PERSONAL STORY

Belinda has been cross-dressing at different times since she was a teenager. She's considered starting hormone treatment but isn't sure, however she's of the opinion that it may help her understand who she really is. She enjoys the freedom

Questions? Concerns?

The Gender Centre counselling service provides a high quality professional psychological service to the

of expressing her feminine side.

JESSICA'S TRANSITION EXPERIENCE ASSAULTS AND BEATINGS, I'VE HAD MY SHARE

Jessica believes that she was born a girl in a male body however her female side soon came out. She describes herself as happiest when in her sister's clothes and make-up, but when her father caught her in a dress she received the first of many bitter floggings.

ON BEING A GIRL LET US BE WHOLE AND HAPPY WOMEN

Jenny is a biological male who desperately wants to be a girl – in her case, only some of the time because she enjoys the kind of gender wholeness that she has even though many girls-like-her cannot understand how she can be comfortable living both apparently different lives.



transgender and gender questioning community. Come in and talk confidentially with the Gender Centre's Counsellor (by appointment only).

9:00am - 4:30pm Monday and Thursday only.

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