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Small Town Transition

Would My Desperate Need to Live as Myself be a Sufficient Bolster to my Courage?

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... to transition in my community was going to demand of me a new strength ...

I used to be an Ambulance officer in my community, a position that ensured that I am relatively well known in town. I have lived here for more than twenty years now and aside from my previous employment, my involvement in other community groups gave me an identity to live up to.

I have found the experience of transitioning has provided an enormous release for me, and the further I go, the more contentment I derive from just being me.

Like a thunderclap, my ability to deny my transsexuality any longer collapsed into the silence of my screams and burnt over my shocked family and friends. The door to my hidden life was open to the light for the first time, and if I dared I could walk through that door and let the world see me for who I am. Let the world see as I see me. If I were to relate the trauma and tears of the beginning

period of my transition, I fear that this would obscure the focus of this article.

I will however, say that I have moved on from those early experiences to a realisation that I have learned to love the emerging me, learned to love myself for the first time in my life. In saying this, I do not wish to imply that I now love others less. No. This is an important and necessary "addition" to my store of loves.

So, how might a gentle transsexual woman go about the task of changing her presentation from male-to-female in front of the town? Would my desperate need to live as myself be a sufficient bolster to my courage?

I have long understood that there are many modes of courage, and that to transition in my community was going to demand of me a new strength, not at all like being in burning cars or dangling over cliffs or picking up the mess of a railway suicide. No, I had done these things and more of them compared with what I now had to do. This was going to be different. These people know me, at least they think they do. I had to think this through.

After much consideration, I decided that I had to have a strategy and that the only realistic option was to face the town and attempt to somehow educate the community; give them a factual look at the realities of being transsexual, ask them to accept what for them is a new and very different me. Impossible? No. I will explain how I have set about the task.

I had first to define for myself the dynamics of information spread in a small community; i.e.. how does it happen? How could I make use of it?

My change in gender presentation was one avenue. It gave the first and very telling advice to the town that as far as I was concerned, something radical was afoot. Logically, natural curiosity would fuel itself and spread the "story" to where eyes had not yet seen. But what was being said? I could guess that not too much factual information would be exchanged on those occasions when the topic of conversation swung in my direction.

I thought of where I had engaged in such friendly informal chatter over the years; banks, credit union, newsagency, supermarkets etc. Places where it is part of the staff's job to be engaged in a chat. I would make my start here.

My documentation had to be changed as I had recently changed my name legally, and this provided an ideal opportunity to write a series of letters to the staff at the various institutions and agencies. The fact that these changes involved these people in a face to face encounter with the "new me" provided the ideal opportunity for me to break the ice. The level of curiosity about the change in my gender presentation was high. Comments such as "I've been dying to ask" being typical. During the conversations which ensued, I found opportunities to present my letters and with them a little information pack which as my letter stated "might give them a little glimpse into the realities of being transsexual".

These letters were written and re-written until the format that I sought was found. I was determined to keep the letter to a maximum of one page, less if the desired content could be condensed without missing the essential points to be covered. The letter had to encourage the reader to read the note pack too. At least that was my aim, I had to feed fact into curiosity.

The reaction to my campaign has been surprisingly positive. I have had some very lovely letters and comments in return and to date, not a single overtly negative reaction from anyone, family aside. And it is to be expected that nearly all of us will experience some degree of varied reaction from family members, as our changes affect them much more closely.

I made a point of changing my documentation quickly once I started, to avoid carrying conflicting identification. The process of making these changes produced some very funny moments as I was glad to have taken my sense of humour with me.

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I would be lying if I claimed to have been on top of the whole process from day one and just sailed off on my merry way. The truth is that just like all transsexuals in transition, I have experienced a long learning curve and I have been very lucky along the way. Lucky to have two of the very best friends that anyone could wish for. They have walked this path before me and have taught me so much.

I have learned to be proud of myself and to lay my fears aside to be my transsexual female self happily everywhere I go and with all those I meet.

As I write this article, I am sitting on the train that will take me four and a half hours to reach my friends on the N.S.W. Central Coast, for I live in the Blue Mountains. I am dressed in a lovely soft pink top, lightweight white jeans and my nice new high heels and two other ladies have sat opposite me, said hello and are chatting away quite unconcerned at my presence. It's a wonderful feeling, all the more wonderful in light of the fact that I am on the way to electrolysis today and patches of hair left long for this purpose are covering parts of my face.

This brings me to another point for those contemplating transitioning. These ladies accept me because I have learned to accept myself, facial hair or not. They have read the fact that I am comfortable and so they too are comfortable in my presence. It's strange but this is how it works.

One of my friends said to me recently "to transition, one has to have balls". Well, jokes aside, I respect all transsexuals for having this special courage, for without it, you would not have gotten so far carrying your silent torment alone. You need to focus this courage away from the skills of hiding and absorbing torment and into the first steps of setting yourself free.

I suggest you make use of the tranny support groups. They are an invaluable source of guidance towards the help you will need.

And if you are lucky, you might even find friends as nice as mine. I always find myself urging the train onwards on my weekly visits, so much do I enjoy their company. I hope that I might one day be as good a friend to someone like me, as they have been to me. For I owe it to them to pass on their practical kindness and love.

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