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## Surviving

### ... As an Effeminate Child in an Extremely Homophobic Family

by Eva

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**I was an overtly effeminate male child - at four I wanted to be a ballerina.**

**I** do not remember identifying myself to any gender as a child. I was myself. I was aware of the differences of gender, but never gave my own a great deal of thought. I was an overtly effeminate male child - at four I wanted to be a ballerina. This caused great consternation amongst my family - "You can't be a Ballerina", I remember them telling me. Then I wanted to be a nurse. My family was lower income bracket, "working class". My father was a Wharfie, mother a housewife, grandfather a spray painter, grandmother a Barmaid and so forth. They were extremely homophobic. As I grew older, my alienation from my family grew with my age.

The men were all brutal alcoholic thugs. I wondered later when I tried to see if there was cause to my being a transgender - whether it was a rejection of the male culture I was exposed to as a child, or just genes. The social environment I grew up in was extremely homophobic, in the outer western suburbs. As is the format for many effeminate males, my tribulations escalated at High School.

I went to Fairfield Boys High. I imagine it is still rough, but I doubt it could be any rougher. I was exposed to taunts and bullying at school and home. My relationship with men in my family has deteriorated so drastically that the defamation I received at school was proportionate to that I received at home. I survived as most of us do.

I left home early, and started cross-dressing immediately. I had freedom. At eighteen I started hormones. I have spent the last fifteen years finding who I am. The little contact I have had with family unencouraging, after spending almost half my life living in the gender of my choice they still refer to me as "He" and call me by a name that is totally alien to me, my christened name.

I believe the lack of family support and understanding with the compacted social unacceptance compound the difficulties of being and becoming a transgender. It is not surprising so many of us lack self-esteem, are depressed and resort to drug escapism. But many of us come through the tunnel to the light on the other side, stronger and able to guide those on their journey. I believe in always being kind and supportive to my sisters and am saddened to see sisters empowering themselves by unempowering other sisters. Resorting to the tactics of those that have repressed them.

Unfortunately, my health is now poor and my ability to give to my community is limited. But I hope I have become a stronger, more courageous person. I do not define myself by gender. I am a human being and I have soul and try to be spiritual and compassionate. I would like to say to all my sisters, be brave and strong and love one another, as I love you all.

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